



RESEARCH REPORT

Disrupting Structural Racism

Increasing Transportation Equity in South Dallas

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Errata

This report was corrected on December 2, 2022. In the Executive Summary on page xii, the first bullet has been corrected to indicate that the organization that has a strategic mobility plan is the City of Dallas, not Dallas Area Rapid Transit, and that the suggested framework would center equity in all transportation work, not just the work within Dallas Area Rapid Transit. In the Acknowledgments on page v, language has been added to clarify that this report is part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s “Interrupting Structural Racism” portfolio and was overseen by Urban’s Office of Race and Equity Research.

Executive Summary

The US's long history of exclusionary zoning and other segregationist policies, combined with transportation investments that benefit suburban homeowners over urban renters, has contributed to not only the unequal cities that we have today, but racial gaps in wealth and access to opportunity more broadly. These problems are particularly pronounced in South Dallas, a predominantly Black area of Dallas where a history of racist policymaking and planning has led to inadequate transportation access to jobs and other opportunities. In 2016, Dallas had some of the highest rates of racial and income segregation, and scored 272nd out of 274 cities on overall inclusion.¹

In response to a request by the South Dallas/Fair Park Transportation Initiative, a community group working toward increased transportation access in South Dallas, we undertook case studies of four regions that have improved on or have attempted to improve on transportation equity over the past 10 years. As one local stakeholder noted in early discussions, “If I see one more map of South Dallas in red and North Dallas in green, I’m going to pull my hair out. We don’t need more maps showing us what we already know. We need solutions.” The goal of this work was to identify structural solutions to transportation inequities in Dallas that can be applied both in Dallas and in other regions and that address the root causes of the inequities rather than creating short-term solutions to parts of the problem.

To begin the work, we interviewed stakeholders in Dallas to better understand the needs of residents in the region; the barriers they face to accessing opportunity through transportation; the political and social barriers to increasing transportation access in South Dallas; and which initiatives had already been attempted to address these barriers. We then identified potential case study regions by conducting a quantitative analysis to identify cities with populations over 500,000 that had census tracts with median incomes less than the average median income of tracts in South Dallas and that increased in transportation access between 2012 and 2016 based on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Location Affordability Index. We also conducted desk research of transportation equity initiatives in each region that were identified through the quantitative analysis to identify initiatives of interest. Finally, we worked with the South Dallas/Fair Park Transportation Initiative and other local partners to conduct a desirability/feasibility analysis of the potential case study regions to narrow down our study to four final regions: Portland, Oregon; King County,

Washington; Columbus, Ohio; and Las Vegas, Nevada. We define *transportation equity* as shown in Box ES.1.

BOX ES.1

Definition of Transportation Equity

For the purposes of this report, we define an equitable transportation system as one in which access to opportunity via transit and costs borne by the transportation system (e.g., local air and noise pollution) do not vary with personal characteristics, including disability status, income, race or ethnicity, and gender; and, for any given level of access, use costs are proportionate to ability to pay.

Source: Derived from Stacy et. al 2020 and Litman 2022a.

To undertake the case studies, we first conducted in-depth desk research on each region, including an analysis of the structural history of the region in terms of land use, segregation, equity, and transportation. We then conducted interviews with community leaders, transportation and planning practitioners, public leaders, and other relevant stakeholders in each case study region. To analyze the data, we transcribed the interviews, coded them based on key themes, and wrote the findings for this report and for an accompanying fact sheet summarizing recommendations from these case studies. Before publishing these products, we held a meeting with the South Dallas/Fair Park Transportation Initiative to review the key findings and recommendations and revised them based on feedback from the community. After publication of this report, we will hold a virtual convening with leaders from Dallas and each of the case study regions to support peer learning and to identify policies and programs that may work in South Dallas.

Key findings from the case studies include the following (additional details are shown in table ES.1):

- Intentional equity improvements were caused by a shift in the way all transportation decisions were made, such as establishing equity councils, more diverse political representation, and equity-focused hiring, rather than through individual policies and programs.
- In some cases, ridership coincided with transit dependency, so that transit decisions based on ridership also led to increases in equity. However, ridership does not always coincide with need, such as in cases in which transit-dependent riders, people with low incomes, and/or people of color have been pushed into less dense areas and therefore have lower ridership on their bus or

train lines. This lack of correlation between need and ridership highlights that, on a per dollar basis, investments that might serve more people might be less favorable from an equity perspective, signifying a need to weigh both the number of people served and the type of people served when making decisions.

- Deep and meaningful community engagement is necessary to better understand the needs of communities with low incomes, communities of color, and other people who have historically experienced oppression. Genuine engagement means earning trust from, listening to, and understanding the needs and challenges of a community before proposing solutions. It does not mean going to a community with predefined solutions and telling community members why they should want those solutions. Genuine community engagement also means shifting power structures to give more power in decisionmaking to historically excluded communities, such as people who are Black, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities.
- Community engagement is most effective when it is paired with equity and justice-oriented values. These qualities can be formalized with funding, in institutionalized equity initiatives, or in transportation justice frameworks drafted by the city or local transportation agency. In the absence of a strong guided vision and values created jointly with community members, community voice initiatives may reflect the self-interested priorities of more privileged members of the community and/or focus on addressing short-term needs rather than fixing the root causes of inequities.
- Transportation (and economic development) investments can create gentrification and displacement pressures that can cause unintended negative equity implications. Listening early on to the needs of residents and including them in decisionmaking rather than pushing solutions on them that they may not want and that could cause unintended harm are key to increasing equity.
- Although residential land use is beyond the scope of this study, having an equitable land use structure that provides safe, affordable housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods to people of color and people with low incomes is necessary to creating an equitable transportation system. Coordinated economic development efforts that center community preferences are also necessary, so that efforts are not just about developing transportation modes that connect people to jobs that are far away, but also creating opportunities for jobs that are closer to where people live.

TABLE ES.1

Summary of Transportation Equity Efforts in Dallas and Case Study Cities

Location	Transportation affordability improvement ranking	Structural efforts to improve transportation equity	Individual transportation equity initiatives
Dallas, TX	13th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citywide strategic mobility plan, Connect Dallas, which includes equity as a core project evaluation principle; briefly mentions Fair Park and prioritizing connectivity and a bike facility in the southeast area Paratransit Accessibility Advisory Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GoLink, an on-demand ride service Southern Dallas Link, a nonprofit transportation provider Inland Port Transportation Management Association, a public-private partnership that connects people to economic opportunity The I-30 Canyon Project, an effort to restore connectivity between the northern and southern portions of the city that were severed by a highway
Portland, OR	5th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland Bureau of Transportation's strategic plan, which centers equity throughout Transportation Justice Framework, a plan for centering transportation justice in everything the Bureau does Community engagement initiatives that follow best practices, including strong partnerships with community-based organizations Transit equity advisory groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted safety improvement programs Reduced-fare programs Portland Bureau of Transportation's Equity Matrix
Seattle/King County, WA	2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobility Equity Cabinet, a group of leaders from historically underserved and underrepresented communities that meets regularly to cocreate a set of guiding principles and recommendations for centering equity and sustainability in county transit policies Mobility Framework, the framework produced by the Equity Cabinet Equity-focused hiring Community Connections, a program that connects county transportation officials with local governments to develop transportation solutions suited for their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced-fare programs Dial-a-ride services Unified ORCA card, which allows riders to travel more seamlessly between different agencies and modes of transportation Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement Reform, which is intended to address the effects of systemic racism by decriminalizing fare evasion and centering Black, indigenous, and people of color in community engagement efforts

Location	Transportation affordability improvement ranking	Structural efforts to improve transportation equity	Individual transportation equity initiatives
Columbus, OH	7th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust, proactive, tiered community engagement Interagency collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkUS, a long-term mobility initiative with an equity focus that takes a corridor-based approach to planning for future population growth Downtown C-pass, which makes employees at participating downtown businesses eligible for a free transit monthly pass and is partially funded by a per square foot and per employee tax on participating employers
Las Vegas, NV	4th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unrestricted visioning with the community that is not constrained to ideas that are feasible within current budget constraints and that engages community members in early design and planning conversations Prioritization of communities of color at risk of displacement or who have been displaced Partnerships to close first- and last-mile gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments to increase frequency of bus lines First- and last-mile programs, such as Silver STAR for senior citizens, and a microtransit zone with trips accessible for \$2 Safety and pedestrian protection initiatives

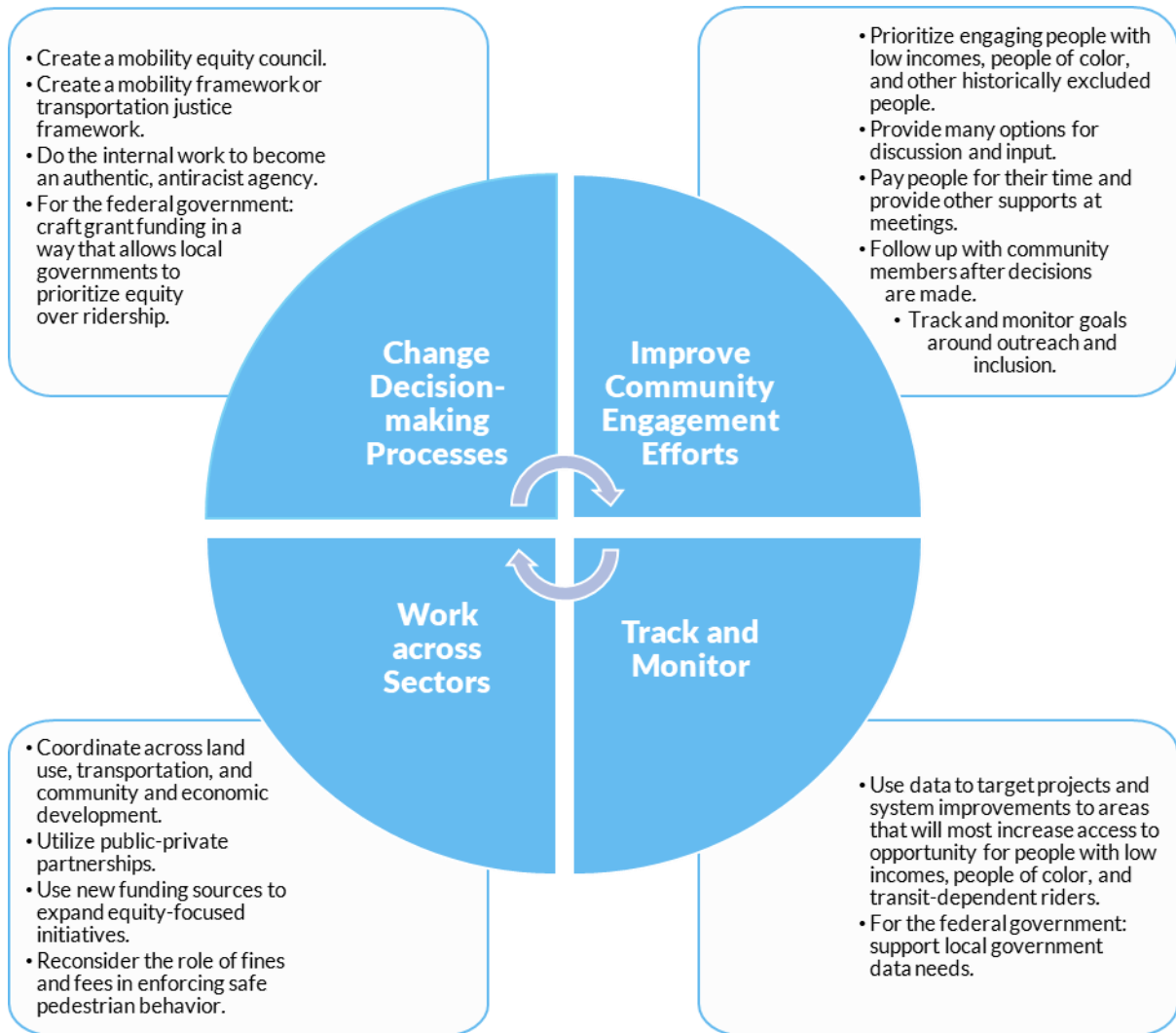
Source: Urban Institute analysis of Location Affordability Index data for low-income census tracts in each city between 2012 and 2016 (<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/location-affordability-index/>).

Note: The modeled transportation costs as a percentage of income were compared between the years 2012 and 2016 to calculate our measures. Although a measure of equity in access to opportunity through transportation would be a more ideal measure, we use this measure as it was the only publicly available panel data on transportation that we could access.

Based on these case study findings, we identified the following structural solutions that leaders in Dallas and other cities could consider if they would like to improve on transportation equity and increase access to opportunity through transportation for people with low incomes, people of color, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalized groups (figure ES.1).

FIGURE ES.1

Recommendations for Increasing Transportation Equity in South Dallas



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Source: Framework developed by the authors.

Recommendations for Dallas and for other cities that wish to increase their transportation equity include the following:

- **Create a mobility equity council**, like that of Portland’s Transit Equity Advisory Committee or King County’s Mobility Equity Cabinet in Washington, that consist of residents and community leaders from neighborhoods with low incomes and communities of color that have limited access to opportunity through transportation. Members should be given decisionmaking power and be paid for their time.

- **Create a mobility equity framework or transportation justice framework**, with the process led by the equity council. A mobility or transportation justice framework, like the Transportation Justice Framework in Portland or the Mobility Framework in King County, is an internal framework for centering transportation justice and equity in everything an agency does. Mobility frameworks include major guiding policies for the agency, including for its strategic plan, service guidelines, and climate action plans. Although the City of Dallas has a strategic mobility plan, it is not focused on equity exclusively but rather mobility more broadly. The suggested framework would center equity in all transportation work and expand upon the equity project evaluation criteria noted in the city's strategic mobility plan.
- **Do the internal work to become an authentic, antiracist agency**. Before going out into the community, Dallas Area Rapid Transit and other transit agencies should look within and reflect on how past efforts both within its own agency and in other agencies and departments within the city and region have affected equity. It should then make concerted efforts to create a culture of equity and antiracism within the agency by doing things such as increasing the focus on equity in hiring and on the board; expanding departments of diversity and inclusion to go beyond engagement with minority- and women-owned businesses to focus on a broader mission of equity throughout the entire system; and centering equity in the overall strategic plan. Dallas Area Rapid Transit should also grow its capacity to hear and receive feedback and acknowledge past harms.
- **Improve community engagement efforts** by investing in deep engagement early on to understand the needs of communities long before solutions are proposed and by conducting continued engagement as solutions are proposed and implemented. Specific ways in which community engagement efforts can be done include the following:
 - » **Prioritize engaging people with low incomes, people of color, and other historically excluded people**. This engagement can be done by hosting events in locations these individuals already regularly visit (such as rec centers, schools, or service locations) or partnering with grassroots or community-based organizations that regularly serve or interact with these populations. Hiring local residents to conduct outreach with communities of color and communities with low incomes is another way to increase inclusion for community engagement.
 - » **Provide many options for discussion and input**. Online participation in community engagement can be skewed toward people with higher incomes and people who are white and exclude people who do not have access to computers or broadband.² But it can also

provide an opportunity for input for people who are unable to travel to in-person meetings because they are immunocompromised or face other constraints, such as child care duties or a lack of access to transportation. Therefore, providing both in-person and online engagement options can help increase the likelihood that everyone is able to participate. Moreover, providing several discussion opportunities, including small sessions for people with similar backgrounds (e.g., people who all speak a language other than English), can help increase the likelihood that participants feel comfortable engaging.

- » **Pay people for their time and provide other supports at meetings.** Although paying everyone who participates in community meetings is likely financially prohibitive, compensating participants when feasible can help increase inclusion by removing the financial barrier for participation for community members with low incomes, and can let residents know that their expertise and time are valued. In particular, localities should compensate residents in key leadership roles, such as committee members and leaders, and advertise these roles to people who have not typically been well represented in community engagement. Localities can also help increase regular participation by providing travel vouchers, child care, and food at meetings.
 - » **Follow up with community members.** After input has been analyzed and decisions have been made, follow up with community members in person and online about those decisions, next steps, and their experiences with the engagement process. A lack of transparency about what happens after engagement can erode the trust that was developed during the input process. Building long-term trust and increasing transparency with community members require that they have a clear understanding of next steps, including how their input was acted on and what the timeline is for implementation.
 - » **Track and monitor goals around outreach and inclusion.** Cities should track and monitor in real time how inclusive their community engagement processes are. For example, cities should collect data on the demographics of participants to see whether each group represents the population as a whole, or even better, overrepresents groups that have been historically marginalized and excluded from decisionmaking. They should also host in-depth discussions and focus groups with community members to better understand which parts of the process worked and which could be improved.
- **Coordinate across land use, transportation, and community and economic development** to not only create a land use structure that supports a robust transit infrastructure, but also to increase access to opportunity in South Dallas by bringing jobs that residents want to the

region. All of these decisionmaking bodies should integrate community voice in the process, just as we recommend here for transportation.

- **Use new funding sources to expand equity-focused initiatives.** Such sources could include passing a fuel revenue indexing measure similar to that of Nevada's; a per square foot and per employee tax on participating employers for free transit passes similar to the funding mechanism in Columbus; or taking advantage of new federal grant opportunities like the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program, which allows for the integration of transportation, land use, and community engagement into the transportation planning process.
- **Use data to target projects and system improvements** to areas that will most increase access to opportunity for people with low incomes, people of color, and transit-dependent riders. This targeting means directing investments not only to areas where these people live, but also to areas where they need to go for work, shopping, health care, and community activities.
- **Consider decriminalizing jaywalking and reconsider the role of fines and fees in enforcing safe pedestrian behavior.** Jaywalking fees and police enforcement have been shown to disproportionately target Black and Latinx residents, building on the racist history of municipal fines and fees to attempt to control the behavior of Black laborers in the postemancipation era. Therefore, local (and state) leaders should consider reducing or eliminating jaywalking fees, similar to the way that Nevada did, where jaywalking was changed from a criminal offense punishable by up to six months of jail time and up to a \$1,000 fine to a civil penalty with no more than a \$100 fee.

At the state and federal levels, leaders could also consider the following recommendations to increase transportation equity in cities:

- **Craft grant funding in a way that allows local governments to prioritize equity along with ridership,** such as by allowing local agencies to build infrastructure like rapid transit bus lines in neighborhoods with fewer overall riders but more transit-dependent riders and riders with low incomes. Grants should also encourage or require high-quality community engagement, staff capacity building, partnering with nonprofit organizations or allowing them to lead grant proposals, and equity analyses and tracking.
- **Support local government data needs.** The federal government and state governments can help to increase transportation equity by providing the data and/or capacity at the local level needed to use data to make equity-focused decisions. Interviewees noted that a key challenge

to increasing equity is producing and accessing the data that will help measure progress toward equitable outcomes. As one transit leader noted, “We want to make data-driven decisions. We want to center racial equity. We have struggled to really have the datasets that allow us to do that.”

Overall, transportation inequities in Dallas and other regions caused by decades of structural racism need to be solved not by individual policies or programs, but by changing the structure of the systems in which they are implemented. Solutions must also go beyond transportation decisionmaking, because structural inequities do not stop at the boundaries of transportation. Organizational change management and racial equity capacity building are also essential to this process, so that equity does not just become a box that someone checks off, creating further marginalization and frustration.

“I think from my perspective, structural change is not around a specific initiative. It's around changes in the approaches we take in doing our work overall.” —Portland area public-sector interviewee

Disrupting Structural Racism: Increasing Transportation Equity in South Dallas

Decades, if not centuries, of racist policies, programs, and institutions have created the segregated cities that we see today. This segregation keeps many people of color and people with low incomes far from opportunity and without adequate transportation options to get them where they need to go, such as to jobs, school, health care, grocery stores, and greenspace.

In some cities like Birmingham, Alabama, the highway system was designed to maintain the racial boundaries that had been established through racial zoning laws (Connerly 2002). In other cities, such as Nashville, Tennessee, planners rerouted proposed highways to prevent harming white-owned and -operated businesses and instead used them to demolish or relocate Black-owned businesses.³ In southern and border states and in some northern cities, authorities placed the only schools that served Black children in designated neighborhoods and provided no transportation for black students who lived elsewhere (Rothstein 2017). Moreover, many suburbs were only made possible by massive public investment in freeways, infrastructure, and mortgage guarantees, while the government was underinvesting in urban neighborhoods and making it harder for their residents to buy homes.⁴

Even within public transit, direct inequities exist in what white residents have access to compared to Black residents and other people of color. Some argue that transit agencies have built two systems with different standards for “choice” and “dependent” riders, which often correlates with white and Black.⁵

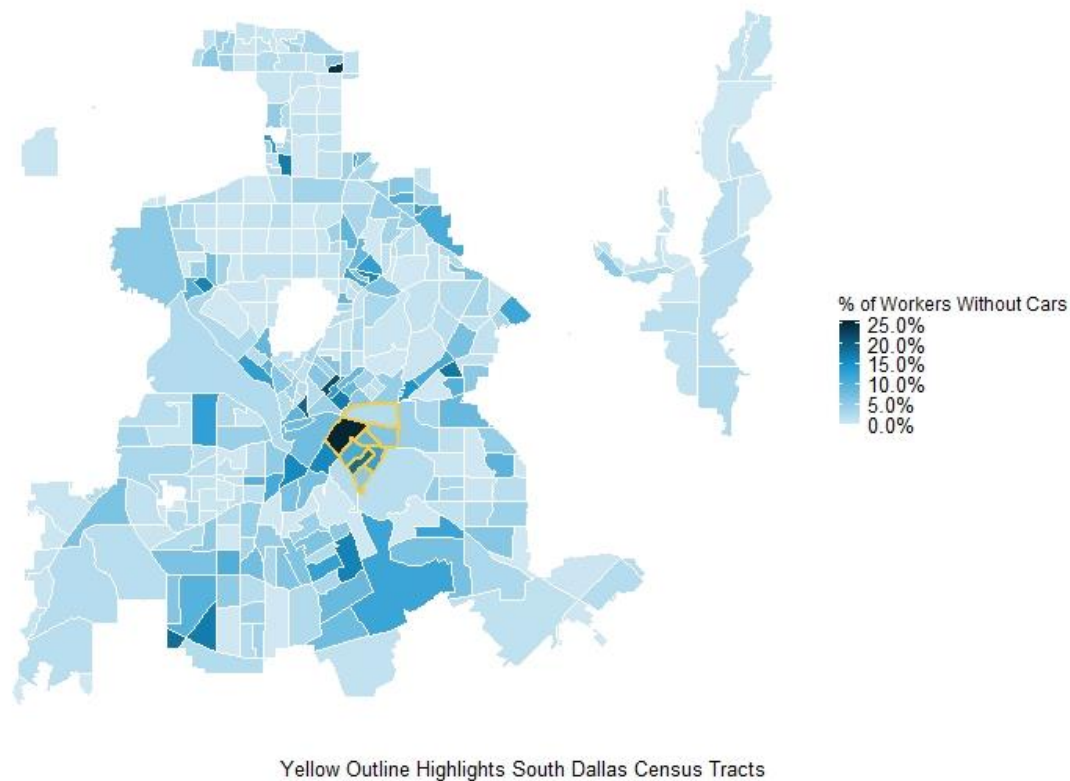
Land use and housing policy has also contributed to these disparities. When the federal government created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1933, it created color-coded maps on which to make refinancing decisions, with the safest neighborhoods colored green and the riskiest colored red. Neighborhoods were marked red if people who were Black lived in them, even if they were solid middle-class neighborhoods. Public and assisted housing also perpetuated segregation, with many cities only offering vouchers to people who were white and public housing units to people who were Black until as late as 1998. During the pre-2008 housing bubble, mortgage brokers targeted lower-middle-class Black

communities for subprime lending, which left many more Black families subject to default and foreclosure than economically similar white families (Rothstein 2017).

Current transportation spending patterns reinforce these historic inequities. For example, in 2017, cumulative spending on highways in the US at all levels of government was \$9.7 trillion, whereas spending on mass transit and rail was only \$2.6 trillion.⁶ This outsized investment in the highway system disproportionately benefits residents who live in suburban and rural areas, the large majority of whom (68 and 79 percent, respectively) are white (Parker et al. 2018). People of color are less likely to own a car. In 2019, 18 percent of Black households and 11 percent of Latinx and Asian households were without a vehicle, compared to only 6 percent of white households.⁷ All this means that “we have invested heavily in highways to connect commuters to their downtown offices but comparatively little in buses, subways, and light rail to put suburban jobs within reach of urban African Americans” (Rothstein 2017, 188–9).

In Dallas and South Dallas, inequities in access to opportunity are particularly pronounced. In 2016, Dallas had some of the [highest rates of racial and income segregation, scoring 272nd out of 274 cities on inclusion](#).⁸ A 2017 study showed that most of the transit-dependent riders in Dallas live in South Dallas (a situation that has persisted into more recent years, as seen in figure 1), while most of the low-wage job growth has occurred in North Dallas.⁹ One-third of Dallas’ transit-dependent residents did not live within a quarter mile of a bus stop or a half mile of a rail station.¹⁰ These and other inequities are both caused by and lead to vast disparities in social and economic outcomes. Data from 2019 show that zip codes in South and Southeast Dallas had the highest health care disparities in Dallas County, with a higher percentage of single-family households led by women and a higher percentage of men in the corrections system. Forty percent of the people in those areas do not have internet access.

FIGURE 1
Percentage of Workers without Cars in Dallas and South Dallas



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Source: Urban Institute analysis of 2015-2019 American Community Survey data.

These structural inequities must be solved by changing the structure of the systems in which they are implemented, not by enacting individual policies or programs, although policies are better than programs because programs can come and go and do not come with as much accountability.¹¹ Moreover, solutions must go beyond transportation decisionmaking, because structural inequities do not stop at the boundaries of transportation: they are multisectoral and multidimensional. Structural inequities in transportation are connected to structural inequities in housing, community and economic development, education, and many other sectors.

Additionally, the how is just as important—maybe even more so—than the what. For instance, if we build equity councils and give them authority and resources but do not do the work to ensure the rest of the agency or government as a whole is ready to accept what they have to say, then we have just created another vehicle for marginalization and frustration. Therefore, organizational change

management and racial equity capacity building are essential to increasing equity. If we try to change the system without changing the people within it, the same-old-same-old will reemerge.

Our goal is to build on prior work to identify practical, relevant solutions from the selected case study cities that Dallas stakeholders and other leaders could replicate to address transportation inequities in their regions. None of the case study areas are perfect in terms of transportation equity, but they all either improved on transportation equity between our two selected time periods or they made concerted efforts to do so. We focus on public transportation, micromobility, and active mobility rather than roads and highways, as many residents in South Dallas do not have access to a car.

We use three frameworks to examine transportation inequities. A historical framework allows us to explore and understand the moments that affected contemporaneous and subsequent racial disparities and inequalities. A systemic framework lets us account for how overlapping structural barriers that people of color disproportionately face across housing, employment, access to health care (Artiga and Hinton 2018), reliable transit, and other social determinants of health accumulate to become systemic constraints on opportunity and health equity (Gee 2016; Gee and Ford 2011). Finally, we use a forward-looking framework that focuses on indicators strongly associated with expanded opportunity, particularly for people of color, and that examines how policy changes could alter structural constraints and lead to increased opportunity and equity in the future. These frameworks help us to identify the structural barriers to transit and opportunity that people in South Dallas and similar neighborhoods throughout the country face so that we can then identify structural solutions.

To define structural change to address racial inequity, we began with a definition of structural racism from the Aspen Institute. We then looked at definitions of structural change. Because these definitions tend to focus on changes to an economy,¹² we adapted them to fit to this context. Finally, we combined these two definitions into a definition that is specifically about structural change to address structural racism (box 1).

BOX 1

Definitions of Structural Racism and Structural Solutions

We define structural racism, structural change, and structural change to address structural racism in the following ways:

- **Structural racism:** “A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges

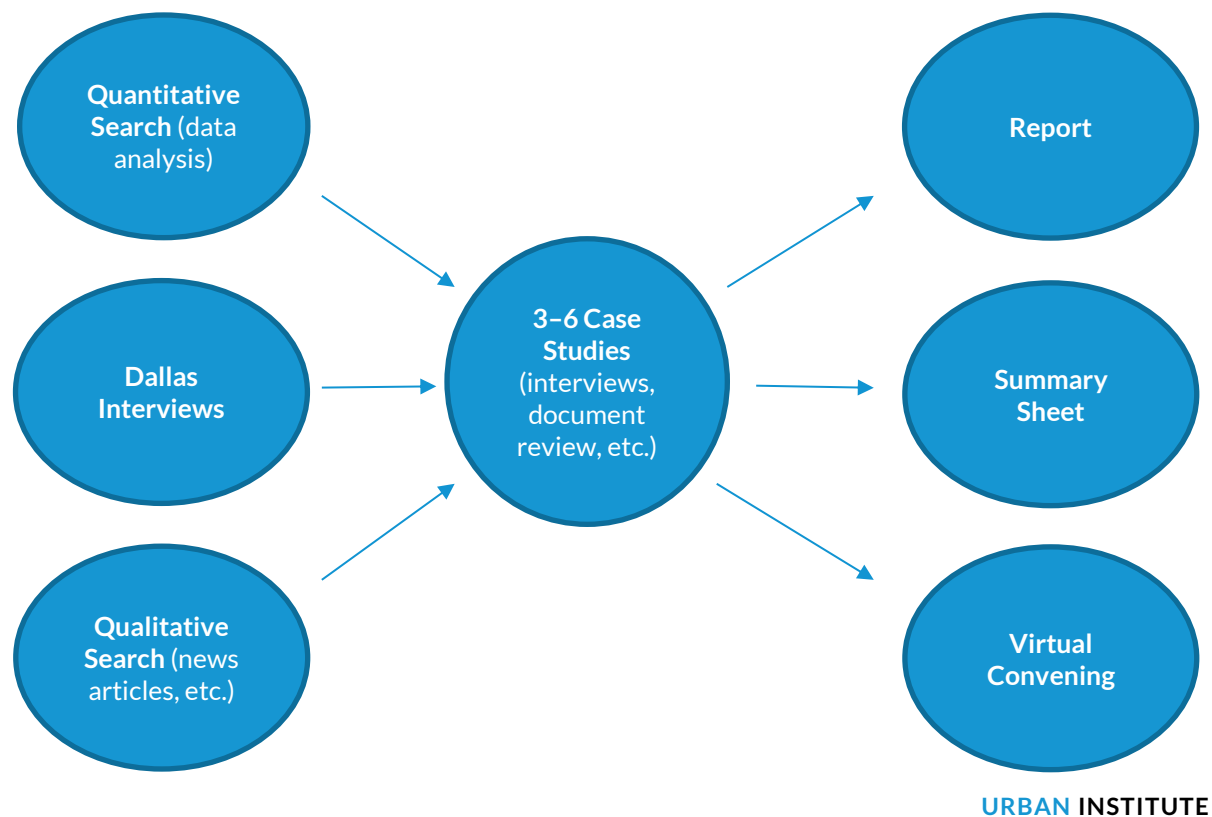
associated with ‘whiteness’ and disadvantages associated with ‘color’ to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist” (Aspen Institute n.d.). In this report, we focus on understanding historical and systemic racism. Historical racism has affected past and contemporary racial disparities and inequities. Systemic racism is shaped by the overlapping structural barriers that people of color disproportionately face across housing, employment, access to health care, access to child care, reliable transit, and other social determinants of health. As these structural barriers accumulate and reinforce each other, they produce lasting, widespread constraints on opportunity and health equity. Within structurally racist systems, structures can produce inequities even if people operating within the system are not individually racist.

- **Structural change:** Deep-reaching change that alters the way authority, capital, resources, information and responsibility flow within and between organizations, and in turn, shapes power and privilege dynamics. Structural change affects all parties directly or indirectly.¹³
- **Structural change to address structural racism:** Deep-reaching changes that alter the ways in which authority, capital, and information flow within and between communities. These types of changes address the root dimensions of inequities, or those that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color.” They also affect all parties either directly or indirectly within and across communities.

Methods

To select and analyze data from four case study regions in which policy or program changes increased transportation equity in underserved neighborhoods, we used a mixed-methods approach, summarized in figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Study Approach



Source: Framework developed by the authors.

To begin, we interviewed stakeholders in Dallas to better understand the needs of residents in South Dallas, the barriers they face to accessing opportunity through transportation, the political and social barriers to increasing transportation access in South Dallas, and which initiatives had already been attempted to address these barriers. Interviewees included the following:

- community leaders in South Dallas who could speak to the lived experience of residents in the region
- leaders from the various levels of local and regional government who make decisions about transportation investments
- other stakeholders involved in decisions about transportation investments in the region

We then identified potential comparison regions for the case study research by conducting a quantitative analysis to identify areas meeting the following two parameters: cities with populations

over 500,000 people that had census tracts with median incomes less than \$40,000 (South Dallas census tracts average a median income of \$40,000) and that increased in transportation access between 2012 and 2016 based on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Location Affordability Index.

Because the preliminary quantitative review focused on affordability as a barrier to transportation access due to data availability, we undertook additional desk research to consider broader aspects of transportation access, including overall access to opportunity through transportation; first- and last-mile service availability; service geography and hours; and logistical barriers to transit service, such as the ability of people who are unbanked to purchase transit cards with cash. To do so, we did the following:

- scanned newspaper articles, research studies, and other written materials to identify innovative and successful transportation investments that might not appear in the quantitative analysis
- held discussions with Dallas stakeholders to understand which types of regions and initiatives might be of interest

We then worked with members of the South Dallas/Fair Park Transportation Initiative (SDFPTI) and other Dallas stakeholders to select four case studies. To do so, we held an in-person workshop with 33 community, nonprofit, and public-sector leaders in which the Urban team presented the potential case studies to participants, moderated a discussion of the case study options, and administered a feasibility/desirability survey to in-person meeting attendees, with an online Qualtrics survey option for virtual participants or attendees who preferred to submit their responses after the meeting. The survey assessed two aspects across the four proposed case studies:

- the **desirability** of a given case study's policy approach and initiatives, or its value and relevance to South Dallas' particular transportation challenges
- its **feasibility**, or the likelihood the approach could be implemented given political, policy, and resource dynamics

Respondents rated each option on a 10-increment scale of 100 and were also asked to rank overall preferences among the four case studies. Additionally, the survey asked respondents to list their residential zip code to help us assess the geographic spread of respondents. All respondents lived in Dallas, with six living in the immediate South Dallas neighborhood near Fair Park. From this exercise and based on the discussions at the convening, we selected the four case study cities based on a

combination of their desirability and feasibility for the region. Three cities were from the initial list, and one was added after the meeting.

To undertake the case studies, we first conducted desk research on each region, including an analysis of the structural history of the region in terms of land use, segregation, equity, and transportation. We then conducted interviews with community leaders, transportation and planning practitioners, public leaders, and other relevant stakeholders. The number of interviews by city and stakeholder category are summarized in table 1.

TABLE 1
Case Study and Dallas Interviewees

Case Study Location	Number of Interviewees		Total
	Community/nonprofit interviewees	City/regional planners, government staff, and public officials	
Dallas, TX	2	9	11
Portland, OR	3	2	5
King County, WA	3	2	5
Columbus, OH	1	9	10
Las Vegas, NV	1	3	4
Total	10	25	35

Source: Authors' data.

We transcribed the interviews, coded them based on key themes, and wrote the findings in this report and an accompanying fact sheet summarizing best practices from these case studies. Before publishing these products, we held a meeting with SDFPTI to review the key findings and recommendations and revised them based on feedback from the community. After publication of this report, we will conduct a virtual convening with leaders from Dallas and each of the case study cities to support peer learning and to identify policies and programs that may work in South Dallas.

South Dallas

South Dallas is located south of downtown Dallas, Texas, and bordered by the Trinity River on the west, I-30 on the north, and the Great Trinity Forest to the south and east. The residents of South Dallas are predominantly Black,¹⁴ due in part to a long history of racist policies and practices that kept the area segregated from the rest of the city.¹⁵

After slavery was abolished, many formerly enslaved people settled in South Dallas (among other freedmen communities throughout Dallas) (Prior 2020, par. 1). In 1886, Dallas was given the rights to the state fair and located it in South Dallas, creating an area called Fair Park, which housed a number of public events. In the 1920s it was used as a recruitment site for the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁶

Surrounding Fair Park in South Dallas were government-designated redlined zones (designated in 1937) that were deemed unfit for investments, thereby allowing for the denial of mortgages and other services based on the demographic makeup of the neighborhood. One report estimates that today, about 20 percent of banks in Dallas do not serve neighborhoods below I-30, thus excluding Black and Hispanic households in South Dallas from access to loans, despite the Community Reinvestment Act requiring lending institutions to meet the credit needs of low- and moderate-income communities.¹⁷

In 1949, many residents of Freedman's Town (a neighborhood of descendants of formerly enslaved people in North Dallas) were forced to relocate to areas in South Dallas when the North Central Expressway was completed. The new expressway divided North Dallas into East and West and caused large numbers of evictions from North Dallas (Prior and Kemper 2005, 191). In 1957, I-30 opened, dividing North Dallas and South Dallas, which made it difficult for residents without cars to get into areas north of I-30.¹⁸

In 1983, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) was created as a regional bus system, supported by a 58 percent vote. In 1989, DART was the official Dallas area transit system, and it continued to expand until June 14, 1996, when the light rail system was created. Despite its intention to provide meaningful and reliable transportation to Dallas residents, some studies suggest DART does not equally serve all areas. A study from the Center for Transportation Equity, Decisions, and Dollars at the University of Texas at Arlington found immense disparities in transit access for transit-dependent residents of Dallas and that more than 65 percent of residents have access to less than 4 percent of regional jobs by a 45-minute transit commute time. This study also found that most transit-dependent riders in the region live in South Dallas¹⁹. According to AllTransit rankings, which look at connectivity, access to jobs, and frequency of service, among metropolitan regions with a population of 1,000,000 or more, Dallas ranks last in its overall transit score.²⁰

Even with these vast disparities in access to opportunity through transportation, the Dallas Equity Indicators project, described in more detail below, scored transportation equity in Dallas at 74 out of 100 based on racial gaps in private vehicle availability, commute time, and the average number of public transit trips available. The indicators project scored transportation equity fairly high even though it noted vast disparities in these three metrics by race, such as an average number of vehicles available

per person of 1.01 for households that are white compared to 0.83 cars available for households that are Black.

Transportation Needs in South Dallas

In response to these inequities and in an attempt to advocate for increased transportation access in South Dallas, about a dozen South Dallas–based nonprofit organizations came together in 2018 to create SDFPTI. To better understand specific resident needs in South Dallas, in 2019 SDFPTI undertook a community survey of 200 residents.²¹ Through the survey, the group learned that the main barriers to public transit use in South Dallas were that riders felt that transfers and connections were inconvenient, bus stops were too far away, or the buses and infrastructure were unsafe or unsanitary. The group also noted a desire for more jobs within South Dallas to expand economic opportunity and minimize reliance on transit to reach jobs farther away.

Other recent studies have noted the following:

- About a third of residents in the Dallas region do not have walking access to a transit station, and therefore distance to transit stations could be a major barrier to transit use (Hamidi and Weinreich 2017).
- Residents in a significant portion of the transit-dependent core have to wait more than 15 minutes for transit, with even longer wait times during off-peak hours, indicating that wait times are also a major barrier to riding transit (Hamidi and Weinreich 2017).
- In Dallas County, Black residents account for 33 percent of pedestrian fatalities, even though they comprise only 23 percent of the county’s population.²² These statistics reflect national trends: poor and unsafe street conditions disproportionately affect communities of color and with low incomes, and the lower a metro area’s median income, the more dangerous its streets are for pedestrians.²³
- Fares are relatively affordable, and DART offers reduced fares for seniors, children, students, and people with disabilities, so fare affordability is likely not a key contributor to the relatively low transit ridership rate in Dallas (Hamidi and Weinreich 2017).

Interviews with stakeholders in the Dallas region, including community leaders, regional planners and regional transportation agency staff, and city staff, revealed similar challenges and needs:

- **Last-mile connectivity**, or the degree to which transportation systems connect people to final destinations such as work, health care centers, grocery stores, or other key locations, is a core challenge, with interviewers sharing experiences of people walking, biking, or skateboarding long distances to reach end destinations not covered by bus or rail systems.

- **Transportation infrastructure and safety** also shape ridership and the desire to ride public transit. Inconsistencies in bus stop infrastructure, such as the presence of bus shelters or sidewalks that extend to bus stops and a lack of street lighting, can impact people’s sense of safety and can limit accessibility for people with disabilities or mobility challenges. Interviewees also noted that people experiencing homelessness sometimes use buses and bus stops as shelter, prompting a need to evaluate both how to better connect people experiencing homelessness to social services and how to ensure buses and bus stops fulfill their primary purpose as a means of transportation rather than temporary shelter.
- **A car-centric infrastructure** and a “driving culture”—the use of vehicles as a first preference given historic policy investments in land use and decisions shaping roads, highways, and parking—can also shape public preferences toward and government prioritization of alternative transportation modes. Yet barriers to vehicle ownership drive inequities in transportation systems, especially for people with low incomes, people experiencing homelessness, and people who lack legal documentation. Upfront ownership costs, ongoing maintenance costs, the need for legal identification to operate a vehicle, and outstanding tickets can all present obstacles to car ownership.
- **Financing** can limit the feasibility of public transit expansion or investments in other transportation efforts. Sales taxes are the primary financing mode for transit agencies in Texas, and although interviewees described general support for funding light rail systems that are perceived to have higher returns on investment, they also noted less willingness on the part of government agencies to increase spending on bus transit.
- **Low-density zoning** can also create challenges for public transit expansion, limiting key aspects of strong public transit systems, like frequency of service.

Transportation and Equity Initiatives in Dallas and South Dallas

To begin to identify potential solutions to structural transportation inequities in South Dallas, we first sought to learn about what efforts had already been undertaken or were in progress to increase transportation equity and to bolster public transit service both throughout the Dallas area and South Dallas specifically.

TRANSIT INITIATIVES

One initiative identified by interviewees was a bus service redesign called DARTzoom that launched in January 2022 with the goal of expanding coverage, increasing service frequency, and improving access to jobs. DART indicated that the redesign would increase the number of jobs that an average resident of its service area could reach in one hour by 34 percent (Dallas Area Rapid Transit 2021).

As DARTzoom is in its first year of service, it is too early to evaluate its performance, but interviews with Dallas stakeholders highlighted that the removal of some bus stops under this plan may limit transportation access for transit-dependent riders, and that efficiency, but not equity, was a primary initiative goal. One interviewee noted that a stop had been removed in front of a nonprofit service center, and that it is difficult for clients of that service center to use the next closest bus stop given poor lighting along the adjacent walkway. Another interviewee noted that a bus stop in front of a barber shop and training school had been removed, resulting in fewer visits from elderly patrons who struggled to walk the increased distance to the business. In response to rider feedback, DART announced modifications to some of its redesigned routes in the spring, with several bus routes seeing minor scheduling or route adjustments.²⁴ Interviewees noted that in any redesign, transit providers must consider the challenging balance of providing streamlined, frequent service—including removing low-use transit stops—with the needs of transit-dependent riders, especially those with mobility challenges.

“As we were going through the public engagement process, I think we realized that we didn’t have really any community trust built up, and so as a result, because we also hadn’t talked about equity and how important that was, what I think is still a very good transit system redesign fell very flat with the very riders that we needed to convince was going to be a good system for them and focused on their needs.” —Dallas-area public sector interviewee

In 2021, DART began piloting GoLink, an on-demand ride service, in the South Dallas/Fair Park neighborhood. GoLink connects riders from DART stations to destinations in designated zones, bridging last-mile connectivity gaps and providing an alternative transportation option outside of DART bus service hours, especially for shorter trips. According to interviewees, GoLink’s expansion into South Dallas was a direct result of SDFPTI advocacy, signaling a good level of responsiveness from the agency to community needs. However, interviewees noted that the hours of operation for the pilot—with rides

available from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM—were so limited as to make the service not useful for many residents. Interviewees also said that limited marketing at launch may have stifled public awareness of the service, and that some residents who could benefit from the program, including those served by a local antipoverty nonprofit, were either unaware of the program or unclear on how it could be accessed. Additionally, though riders can purchase a GoPass fare card with cash at local convenience stores, they cannot use cash at the point of service, but instead must book trips with a credit card, debit card, or previously purchased GoPass. For people who lack a bank account or who are cash dependent, the lack of cash options on board GoLink can render the service inaccessible. Moreover, at least one interviewee noted limited GoPass purchase sites throughout South Dallas,²⁵ and expressed concern that pass retailers include check cashing and payday lending businesses, which offer excessively high-interest loans that can often trap borrowers of color in debt cycles, exposing riders to potential financial risk.²⁶

“[We could spend money] building a cool app, which again, it’s a cool app, but a cool app to tell you that the bus isn’t coming for 40 minutes doesn’t help you a whole lot.” —Dallas-area public sector interviewee

Southern Dallas Link, a nonprofit that coordinates transportation to employment centers and key services for a limited number of residents in South Dallas, is another service that helps to fill last-mile gaps between public transit end stations and final destinations like jobs and health centers.²⁷ Southern Dallas Link has worked to ensure eligible partner employers offer a livable wage, thus connecting people to jobs that can bolster financial security. Although services like this do not solve structural transportation access challenges, they can play an important role in filling gaps in the transportation landscape. These services may be limited in scope given the relatively small number of people they can serve and the lack of flexibility on locations and times that potential riders can access the services.

Southern Dallas Link is part of the Inland Port Transportation Management Association, a public-private partnership that leverages regional transit agencies, private services like UberPool, and nonprofit transportation services to connect people to economic opportunity in the Inland Port, a hub of more than 100 employers. People employed by Inland Port member businesses have access to subsidized rides and can share rides with other commuters. In the absence of broadscale public transit or in cases where low-density zoning creates challenges for broad public transit service, partnerships like these play important roles in economic development because they can help people reliably get to

work and provide employers with lower turnover rates and fewer costs associated with training new staff. However, similar to Southern Dallas Link, they may be difficult to scale in a way that the services are accessible to and affordable for all residents.

DART's Citizens Advisory Committee and Paratransit Accessibility Advisory Group offer forums for community members to share concerns and needs with DART and to inform the public about DART policies and program changes. Community councils are important structures for ensuring transparency and community engagement on transportation decisions, but two elements of the Citizens Advisory Committee, in particular, may limit representativeness. First, DART board members nominate Citizens Advisory Committee members, potentially limiting the pool of potential participants to those already in board members' social sphere. Second, the committee is described as representing the interests of businesses, transit users, homeowners, students, and the elderly. Although "transit users" is a broad term that could capture a range of constituencies, specifically listing one group, such as homeowners, while excluding another, such as renters, can signal centering the needs and preferences of one group or demographic, potentially stifling broader community input.

The Texas Department of Transportation, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, and the City of Dallas (2021) are also working to restore connectivity between the northern and southern portions of the city through an initiative called the I-30 Canyon Project. The Coalition for a New Dallas,²⁸ a nonprofit group working to remove the physical and economic barriers that have divided neighborhoods, reinforced segregation, and stifled economic opportunity, has proposed a series of demands of the Canyon Project. These demands include no eminent domain of private property to build a new highway, a narrowing of the highway, no frontage roads except for access points and exits, prioritization of the corridor for emergency vehicles near Baylor University Medical Center, and for the interstate to be below grade so there are street connections reconnecting South Dallas to downtown.²⁹ Although some of these demands are being addressed with the Canyon Project, funding is restricting the scope of the project.³⁰

PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND STRATEGIES

The City of Dallas has also produced several plans and strategies to guide its mobility, planning and land use, and racial equity approaches. In 2021, the city released its first-ever strategic mobility plan, Connect Dallas, a guiding framework for mobility and transportation decisionmaking. The plan outlines six evaluation criteria for ongoing investments, including equity, which is defined in the plan as providing "safe, affordable access to opportunities for all city residents," and strategically investing where need is greatest, primarily among historically disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, which

the plan outlines as areas with a high percentage of Black, Hispanic, senior citizen, and low-income residents (City of Dallas 2021). The plan signals an awareness of equity as a core dimension of strong mobility plans, but it offers minimal detail on how specific vulnerable populations would benefit from particular investments.

The city is also undertaking an update to its 2011 Bike Plan, with a goal of adjusting its bicycle network and bicycle facility design standards by 2023. Micromobility efforts, from bikes to scooters, can enhance transportation networks by providing an environmentally sustainable alternative to vehicles, improving public health through exercise, and offering an affordable means of short- and medium-range distance travel. However, interviews with Dallas stakeholders highlighted public skepticism toward efforts to broaden bicycle use and infrastructure. Interviewees noted businesses' concern that dedicated bicycle lanes will reduce parking and drive down visitors, and concerns of commuters, including those who use public transit, that road diets will increase congestion and travel time to work and key destinations. One person we spoke with from a local government agency expressed a concern that some communities perceive bicycle and scooter infrastructure as a sign of unwelcome gentrification.

On a broader scale, the City of Dallas is developing a racial equity plan, the city's first comprehensive plan of this nature, which aims to align community priorities with government policy and program investments that address institutional racism (City of Dallas 2022). The city is gathering public feedback via a survey that asks respondents to rank priorities across five core categories: economic, workforce, and community development; housing; public safety; infrastructure; and environmental justice. Though transportation access intersects with all five categories and is closely linked with racial equity, the survey does not explicitly mention transportation or transit issues as potential priority areas. Prior city work on equity through the Dallas Equity Indicators project,³¹ which evaluated Dallas' equity progress on five domains, ranked transportation equity high in the city despite research indicating gaps in service and barriers to economic opportunity. Moreover, the chosen evaluation indicators did not reflect how core issues are being addressed through policy, and poor data availability limit the capacity to measure outcomes for important groups like immigrants and LGBTQ people (City of Dallas 2019). Finally, the city is developing its ForwardDallas Comprehensive Land Use Update, which will modify the city's 2006 land use and zoning strategy under a framework that centers social equity, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability.³²

Community Engagement

Interviewees reported mixed levels of community engagement efforts on the part of city and regional groups. One regional official acknowledged that inconsistent community engagement on transportation decisions has led to a lack of community trust. Others noted survey fatigue and a sense that community members have contributed ideas and feedback to numerous city plans, but that the city has not always clearly communicated how community input has shaped programmatic decisions. As COVID-19 continues to present public health risks, in-person community meetings have dwindled, and the digital divide—or inconsistencies in access to reliable internet—has shaped who can participate in virtual public meetings.

“I personally will not survey the community in the traditional sense of a paper or electronic survey. I just feel compelled that we are taking our residents’ intellectual property and not having that loop of returning back to them and saying, ‘We heard you. This is what we’re going to do, and as a result of what you said, this is a result. This is what has been done.’”

—Dallas-area public sector interviewee

Interviewees also described a sense of the city “pushing” plans and ideas onto community members rather than proactively seeking input in advance of project development—and an awareness of the need to change this dynamic. For instance, as mentioned above, interviewees noted a lack of robust public support for investments in micromobility tools like dockless bicycles or scooters, as well as limited city resourcing for community outreach to both hear from residents on their preferences and share why the city views these projects as beneficial. Engagement with community members at every stage of a public project life cycle and throughout the development of broader government policy priorities can offer forums for community members to share whether a proposed idea matches their preferences and needs. Such engagement also gives government officials an opportunity to share information on an investment, dispel misunderstandings, and acknowledge and respond to community concerns and criticisms. Community feedback forums should be ongoing and continually shape project development and policy agendas, including whether a particular project is pursued in the first place, if it not aligned with community priorities.

“When [community members] say that what the city’s going to do is really going to negatively hurt them, that’s the exact opposite of what we want to do. It suddenly looks as though the city, or any governmental agency, is just doing what it’s always done of forcing something on these neighborhoods without their buy-in and consent.” —Dallas-area public sector interviewee

In recognizing inconsistencies in public outreach, one city representative noted a departmental commitment to revamp their community engagement efforts. In particular, the interviewee described efforts to engage a task force of stakeholders representing nonprofits, neighborhood associations, faith leaders, and developers in the development of the Dallas land use plan, and the guiding principles driving neighborhood planning under this plan, including in South Dallas/Fair Park. The interviewee described efforts beyond typical public meetings, like using chalk art and posterboard displays to convey city plans and highlight opportunities for community input, and partnerships with arts and culture departments to consider how to creatively integrate community history into features like street names.

Case Study 1: Portland, Oregon

Portland, Oregon, is well-known in transportation circles for a commitment to equity, including its innovative Transit Equity Advisory Committee.³³ In addition, among cities with a population of greater than 500,000, Portland’s low-income census tracts had the fifth-largest average decrease in transportation costs from 2012 to 2016 according to the Location Affordability Index. The City of Portland has a population of 652,203, about half the size of the population of the City of Dallas (1,304,379), and the metropolitan region is about a third of the size of the metropolitan region of Dallas (2,226,009 compared to 7,637,387). Portland is denser than Dallas, with 4,891 people per square mile compared to 3,841 people per square mile in Dallas.

Portland’s transportation system is made up of four main actors. The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), the city government’s transportation department, oversees infrastructure such as streets and sidewalks, road safety programs, parking enforcement, city bikes and e-scooters, and comprehensive transportation planning.³⁴ PBOT received 8.5 percent of the city’s 2021–22 budget and is funded primarily by the State Highway Fund (which includes sources such as gas tax revenue) and

parking revenue (City of Portland 2021). The second major actor is the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet), the transit agency for Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties, which operates the bus and rail system.³⁵ TriMet is funded primarily by operating revenue, a state mass transit payroll tax, and federal funding (TriMet 2022).³⁶ The third main actor is Metro, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Portland metropolitan area, which, unique among MPOs in the nation, oversees regional planning on both land use and transportation and is composed of democratically elected members. For example, Metro manages Portland's urban growth boundary and also works closely with TriMet by developing their plans for major investments.³⁷ Metro is principally funded by user fees and charges from its services (Metro 2021). Finally, the fourth actor, the Oregon Department of Transportation, is crucial because, among many responsibilities, it oversees the state highways and bridges; provides grants for public transportation projects; and offers guidance and technical assistance to cities, counties, and MPOs.³⁸ It is primarily funded by state transfers, lottery revenue, and federal funds (Oregon Department of Transportation 2021).

Land Use in Portland

Like many other communities in the US, Portland's suburban sprawl and a history of racist housing and land use practices have contributed to inequitable transportation systems. Portland voters approved the first zoning code in 1924, establishing four broad zones: single family, multifamily, business manufacturing, and unrestricted (Hughes 2019). Most residential areas were single family. But in the 1930s and 40s, Portland began to encourage suburbanization, rezoning large portions of multifamily zones to single family. By the 1950s, 95 percent of residential developments were single family, even though only 50 percent of the residential areas were zoned for it (Hughes 2019). These land use policies were accompanied by other policies like redlining and urban renewal that further segregated communities.

Starting in the 1960s, however, there was a shift in Portland politics toward coordinated planning between Portland and the State of Oregon to prioritize sustainable land use and transportation as industries expanded and attracted a younger population. This shift was reflected in the 1973 passage of state Senate Bill 100, which created a statewide land use planning program that aligned local planning with statewide goals for sustainable development and required resident participation in planning processes.³⁹ In 1979, Portland-area voters approved the establishment of Metro, the first and only democratically elected MPO.⁴⁰ In 1994, Metro adopted the 2040 Growth Concept, which established an urban growth boundary and directs local plans and investments to prioritize compact development within that boundary.⁴¹ That same year, the City of Portland furthered the role of community planning

by establishing the Community and Neighborhood Planning program (Hughes 2019).⁴² Since the early 2000s, efforts such as the city's visionPDX in 2005, the Portland Plan in 2009, and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan in 2016 have focused on better engaging community members and establishing equity as a guiding framework in planning processes and documents (Hughes 2019).

While Portland has evolved in its approach to transportation, this history means that transportation access in many underinvested areas in the city is lacking. As one interviewee from the East Portland neighborhood stated, "A big way we are underresourced is our built environment and the transportation system or lack thereof in East Portland." For example, East Portlanders are particularly concerned for the safety of their transportation infrastructure, which is largely car-oriented and inadequate in terms of current safety guidelines, poor lighting and sidewalks, and high-speed limits (PBOT 2021). Across government and community interviewees, there is shared recognition of this challenge.

"Historically, we have done a good job of prioritizing active transportation, making our biking system work better, making transport better, but we have not made that equitable for everyone.... Communities of color primarily have experienced a lot of displacement, an involuntary displacement to areas farther from the center core, where those communities then have less access to the very best of our transportation network." –Portland-area community organization interviewee

Within this context, government and community leaders we spoke with in Portland highlighted three key ways in which the region is working toward advancing transportation equity: ensuring internal alignment in government around transportation equity and justice goals; ensuring meaningful engagement for communities of color and people with disabilities in the decisionmaking process; and prioritizing investments in areas of highest need.

Integrating Equity across Transportation Systems

Although the region still has a way to go before it is truly equitable in terms of access to opportunity through transportation, Portland has a multitude of policies and programs that seek to expand

transportation access and equity. At the core of all transportation initiatives is the work within government to institutionalize equity across all its work. In pursuit of its goals, PBOT's strategic plan follows two central questions for every proposed initiative and policy: (1) Will it advance equity and address structural racism? and (2) Will it reduce carbon emissions?⁴³ This internal alignment is currently materializing into a Transportation Justice Framework, which is described further below.

TriMet has adopted an equity lens that one TriMet interviewee described as “borrowed from the government lens for racial equity.” TriMet created the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Community Affairs, which, according to recent research, resulted in inclusive practices internally, such as ensuring that more work was commissioned from disadvantaged businesses (Karner and Levine 2021).

“I think from my perspective structural change is not around a specific initiative. It's around changes in the approaches we take in doing our work overall.” —Portland-area public sector interviewee

Equity in conversations around transportation policy has evolved over decades. Our interviewees from PBOT and TriMet credit robust, grassroots movements from the community over an extended period of time as the key catalysts to systemic change in Portland. Interviewees commented that their agencies' willingness to receive, learn from, and act on community feedback was an important component in this evolving understanding of equity.

“Not everyone wants to talk about equity. Not everyone wants to own equity. I think it's really important to energize and focus on the folks that are ready for that conversation to build the momentum because you can't change everyone's minds and hearts. I think that's another challenge, making sure you're bringing everyone along. It's not an easy process.” —Portland-area public sector interviewee

Partnerships for Meaningful Community Engagement

Key to establishing equitable practices in government programs is ensuring that the voices of the most transit-dependent communities are heard and shape program design and implementation. Portland follows best practices to achieve this goal, such as ensuring that people leading engagement activities are aware of various community needs (like language and cultural nuances) and that outreach is accessible in time of day and location.

As an institutional practice, Portland's community engagement primarily happens through partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs). Partnerships with CBOs and cultural-specific organizations are important for identifying needs and improving outreach to communities of interest so that they are more aware of the programs available to them. A PBOT interviewee observed that close partnerships with CBOs are helpful in conducting outreach "in a way that [is] meaningful to them as opposed to [PBOT] trying to figure it out on our own." Similarly, interviewees highlighted the need for strong partnerships with other government actors to coordinate engagement efforts to reduce public confusion.

Portland uses community-engaged partnerships not only to inform policies but also to implement them. One community leader noted that government granting has begun to shift to a partnership model as opposed to a contractor-client model. For example, a government entity approached them with a specific goal for East Portland, but left it to the nonprofit to identify the best process to carry it out. "Our government entity obviously did have objectives and goals, but it wasn't a completely prebaked process," the community leader noted.

This partnership approach similarly extends to convening groups of stakeholders to equity advisory boards that help guide transportation policymaking. As these boards are made up of representatives from key transit-dependent communities, they provide a voice for communities in transportation decisions (more on these boards can be found below).

Finally, interviewees recognized that a culture of engaged citizenry has been instrumental in advancing equity goals. CBOs organized among themselves to establish their seat at the table for specific projects and development phases of greatest influence. As one community leader noted, "There are different points where you actually have leverage in planning processes like this.... [Know] when those points of leverage really are." Transportation projects require long-term, sustained citizen engagement because projects take years or even decades to complete. As such, governments should recognize the power of their CBOs and provide adequate support and capacity to sustain their engagement over time.

“I think the lens is really about building power for your community, rather than any one specific thing ... and that means you have a strong and cohesive connected community; people work together to solve collective issues, you have representation at the decisionmaking table in state and local government.” —Portland-area community organization interviewee

Prioritizing Projects in Areas and for Communities of Highest Need

Portland seeks to redress its legacy of unequal development by targeting projects in areas with the most transit-dependent riders and with unsafe infrastructure. A key challenge that remains is producing and accessing the data that will help measure progress toward equitable outcomes. As one PBOT interviewee stated, “We want to make data-driven decisions. We want to center racial equity. We have struggled to really have the datasets that allow us to do that.”

Efforts are underway to address this data gap. PBOT developed an Equity Matrix that maps census tracts based on income, race, and ethnicity. Portland uses this tool to make decisions on policy and to understand the neighborhoods where projects are being developed.⁴⁴ Data are also used not only to target areas, but also specific riders. TriMet administers annual rider surveys to understand why people are riding and what factors would contribute to their riding more (see below for additional information).

Specific Initiatives in Portland

The three key methods described above to shape decisionmaking in the Portland region have led to a number of equity-focused initiatives, a few of which are described below.

PBOT’S TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

PBOT’s strategic plan established the need to develop an internal framework for centering transportation justice in everything they do. PBOT commissioned an internal, 60-page research paper on transportation justice and developed documents on what transportation justice means and how to operationalize it into departmental practices. The framework operates in close contact with communities; the kickoff was organized as a retreat with PBOT staff and CBO representatives.

One concrete example of the framework's incorporation into city practices is the Transportation Justice Partnership Program, a two-year partnership with nonprofits and "equity-centered consultants" to support transportation justice policy development and program implementation on an as-needed basis (City of Portland 2020). The goal was to compensate CBOs for their support and help them build their capacity. As one PBOT interviewee noted, "We work and operate from a frame that if a community is providing us their expertise, they should be compensated for the time." The program's request for proposal offered up to 35 price agreements, each with a maximum value of \$100,000 (City of Portland 2020).

TRANSIT EQUITY ADVISORY GROUPS

The three major institutions governing transportation in Portland have advisory groups that help incorporate equity in policymaking. Starting in 2013, TriMet convened a Transit Equity Advisory Committee, a group of 14 representatives from CBOs from across its service area who speak to the needs of their distinct demographic, culture, and language groups. Annually, TriMet reevaluates who is at the table and who is missing representation in the committee to ensure that as many groups as possible are represented, but particularly those groups that are most transit dependent. As one TriMet interviewee noted, "We want someone who has a little bit of skin in the game, who has the ability to not just inform us but take our information back to their community, to their agency, and share it, and [learn] what do people like, what don't they like?" Research shows TriMet's Transit Equity Advisory Committee has been successful in advocating for a reduced-fare program and decriminalization of fare evasions (Karner and Levine 2021).

"A lot of the conversations or ideas that turn into policies very specific to transit equity go through that committee. All of our annual service plans go through the committee, any service change, any fare policy. It's really the sounding board." —Portland-area public sector interviewee

PBOT and Metro also have relevant advisory groups. PBOT's Pricing Options for Equitable Mobility Task Force works to identify pricing strategies that can advance equity.⁴⁵ Reflecting the task force's influence, the Portland City Council passed a resolution to develop proposals based on principles outlined by its recommendations.⁴⁶ Committees in Metro are not only represented by government

officials, but also by community members, which ensures that topics relevant to communities, such as safety, are part of conversations. In 2017, Metro created the Committee on Racial Equity and made it permanent in 2020. It is composed of 15 members who are appointed for two years, have connections to communities of color, and have related experience in policy development, public participation, and service delivery, among others.⁴⁷

“[Pricing Options for Equitable Mobility] is phenomenal. It is one of the most robust, public participation processes I’ve seen to transform the future of how transportation funding would work in our city.” —Portland-area community organization interviewee

TARGETED SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

PBOT has a variety of capital projects, but interviewees noted that the one that best exemplifies its approach is the Outer Division Safety Project.⁴⁸ This is an ongoing project since 2017 on a street in East Portland that experiences high crash and mortality rates. PBOT has installed a variety of features, including lower speed limits, landscaping to replace the middle turn lane, protected bike lanes, and improved public lighting. PBOT partnered with key community groups to guide the outreach process and offered office hours at the location, as opposed to at the downtown office.

A TriMet representative also highlighted the agency’s overall public safety program as a major initiative that reflects and responds to the diverse concerns of riders. TriMet issued a survey to riders, which received more than 13,000 responses, and carried out focus groups with riders, TriMet committees, and TriMet staff to understand the safety concerns of impacted communities (TriMet 2020). Findings from this research led to a more expansive way of understanding safety: supporting operators; investing in crisis response teams; and having unarmed law enforcement presence, rather than solely focusing on police.

REDUCED-FARE PROGRAMS

Finally, a TriMet representative emphasized its reduced-fare program, which allows people at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level to purchase fares at 72 percent of the cost.⁴⁹ The program uses funding from the state’s Keep Oregon Moving HB 2017 legislation. It also allocated \$700,000 to provide fare assistance to qualifying high school students by partnering with school districts to

determine which students need it most.⁵⁰ This program is being expanded and will also give money to CBOs that serve high school students, especially alternative and GED students.

Case Study 2: King County, Washington

At the outset of the project, SDFPTI expressed particular interest in learning about transportation changes in King County, Washington, the county in which Seattle is located. King County has implemented many equity initiatives, such as reduced-fare programs for riders with income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level,⁵¹ and it is now rolling out fare-free transit for riders with incomes less than 80 percent of the federal poverty level.⁵² Among cities with a population of greater than 500,000, Seattle's low-income census tracts had the second-largest average decrease in transportation costs from 2012 to 2016 according to the Location Affordability Index.

The City of Seattle's population is a bit more than half the size of the Dallas population at 737,015, compared to 1,304,379 for Dallas, and the metropolitan region is similar in proportion at 4,018,762, compared to 7,637,387 for the Dallas region. However, Seattle is more than twice as densely populated as Dallas, with 8,775 people per square mile compared to 3,841 per square mile in Dallas.

One of the main transportation players in the Seattle/King County region is King County Metro (Metro), which operates local and commuter buses within King County. Metro is a countywide transportation system that works closely with other regional transportation systems, including the Seattle Department of Transportation, which is responsible for the maintenance of transportation systems, including roads, bridges, and public transportation within the City of Seattle; and Sound Transit, which operates commuter rail, light rail, and regional express buses within the greater Puget Sound region.⁵³ Metro's ORCA card program allows riders to transfer between modes of transportation and transit systems.⁵⁴ Participating transit agencies include Metro, Community Transit, Everett Transit, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and Washington State Ferries.⁵⁵ Traditional transportation options offered and coordinated by Metro include bus, rail, and ferry options. It also offers and coordinates microtransit and on-demand transit options.⁵⁶

Funding for Metro comes primarily from the King County retail sales tax. Of the 10.1 percent sales tax, 0.9 percent goes to Metro,⁵⁷ which accounts for about half of the agency's funding. Additional sources of funding for Metro include revenue from fares collected on transit and federal grants. Until 2000, when the Washington State legislature eliminated the motor vehicle excise tax for transportation funding, Metro relied on the state for 30 percent of its funding (King County Metro 2014). Metro

currently receives very little state funding, but the recently passed transportation funding bill, Move Ahead Washington, would provide state funding to help Metro reduce the amount of funding it receives from fares. Proposed legislation in King County would use the funding from Move Ahead to grant free ORCA passes to children ages 6 through 18, allowing them to ride free within King County, including on Metro transit and transit provided by other agencies, like Sound Transit.⁵⁸ Funding has also been awarded to Metro by the Federal Transit Administration to help the agency increase its RapidRide service, which is rapid bus service operating four lines throughout King County.⁵⁹

Transportation and Land Use in King County

As in most regions, redlining was prevalent in Seattle for years. In 1975 the Central Seattle Community Council Federation defined redlining as “the practice by banks and other lending institutions of refusing home loans or requiring higher interest rates and larger down payments to otherwise credit worthy people because they happen to live in a certain area.”⁶⁰ Redlining continued until 1968, when the Seattle City Council passed an open housing ordinance “defining and prohibiting unfair housing practices in the sale and offering for sale and in the rental and offering for rent and in the financing of housing accommodations, and defining offenses and prescribing penalties, and declaring an emergency therefore.”⁶¹ Prior attempts at passing the same ordinance failed 2 to 1 in 1964 because of stiff opposition by white residents.

But Seattle’s history of racial exclusion stretches further back than the 20th century. Seattle’s city council banned indigenous people from living in Seattle in 1865, a move that included the forcible expulsion of indigenous residents.⁶² In 1886, mobs forcibly expelled Chinese residents in Seattle, increasing racial violence in the city.⁶³ By the beginning of the 20th century, racial covenants were included in the development of new housing projects, ensuring their racial composition would remain overwhelmingly white, including ones built in the northern part of the city by William Boeing.⁶⁴ Racially restrictive covenants kept Seattle neighborhoods segregated well into the 20th century.⁶⁵

In 1960, Seattle was 92 percent white, with over 90 percent of Black residents living in the Central district.⁶⁶ Seattle and King County today are much more diverse, but redlining and racially restrictive covenants, along with racial violence, have left lasting marks on the city.

More recently, King County has faced massive population growth that, according to interviewees, has far outpaced the infrastructure needed for both public transportation and for roads and bridges, as well as housing. This sudden growth has caused gentrification and displacement and a suburbanization

of poverty that has created pockets of poverty farther from the city center, which has made providing robust transportation a challenge.

One transportation expert we interviewed noted that microtransit, or technology-enabled, on-demand shared transportation that is between traditional fixed-route transit and ride hailing, works particularly well in southern King County because of the land use patterns. The grid of streets makes it easier to operate on-demand transit than in more suburban areas.

Cultural Commitment to Equity

Interviewees cited the organizational commitment to equity at Metro as a key driver of change. In particular, interviewees attributed the increased focus on equity organization-wide to hiring practices that place a high value on equity considerations. Seeking out new employees who share this commitment to equity has contributed to structural changes like the Mobility Equity Cabinet and Framework, discussed below. Additionally, political support for equity measures in King County contributed to this cultural shift.

Transit advocates and community members also pointed to the dedication of Metro staff to equity as a core driver of success. While advocates and community members continue to push Metro staff to improve services and equity measures in venues like the Cabinet, they attribute much of the success of King County in making transportation equitable to the work of Metro officials. Metro's cultural commitment to equity allows the agency to ensure that actionable steps are taken to increase transportation equity.

Interviewees pointed to the difficult internal work of increasing equity within their own agency as a necessary step before equity can be improved.

"You can't be out in the community talking about equity if you don't demonstrate that or have equity measures internally. In the Mobility Framework, we talked a lot about equity for employees and supporting our workforce." —King County-area public sector interviewee

Interviewees also noted a deep understanding within the agency that equity is not about equally serving everyone, but rather about disproportionately serving people who have been historically underserved.

“I think initially people would say, ‘Hey, we’re equitable in transit. We serve everybody.’ That’s not the definition of equity.” –King County–area public sector interviewee

Mobility Framework

Interviewees also noted Metro’s Mobility Framework as a core driver of equity in the system. This framework was mandated by the King County Council, which required Metro to establish a regional planning process to create a Mobility Framework. To do so, Metro established the Mobility Equity Cabinet, discussed below. The Mobility Framework and the Mobility Equity Cabinet operate concurrently to increase transportation equity in King County. The Cabinet has led on the Mobility Framework, according to transit advocates, and Metro has responded to its ideas by proposing policy changes. The same transit advocates said that this was a process that generally worked.

The Mobility Framework includes several major guiding policies for Metro, including policies for its strategic plan, service guidelines, and climate action plans. Interviewees said that it is important to have a guiding policy like the Mobility Framework. Because it was written in part by the Mobility Equity Cabinet, the Framework includes significant contributions from the community. Interviewees pointed to the Framework as a demonstration of the cultural commitment to equity within Metro.

“You have to commit to sharing power and cocreation. We have a couple of sayings about really changing business as usual and replacing it with something better. I believe we were able to accomplish that with the policy updates and the Mobility Framework and the Equity Cabinet.” –King County–area public sector interviewee

Mobility Equity Cabinet

Metro's Mobility Equity Cabinet was established in 2019 to cocreate a policy framework and update Metro's policies to center equity and sustainability. The Cabinet was modeled on King County's Open Space Equity Cabinet, which focused on developing a funding package for parks and open space investment in King County. Metro developed its own Mobility Equity Cabinet, which played a large role in writing the Mobility Framework. In 2022–23, the Cabinet's focus will include advising Metro to implement policies that center equity and sustainability in how Metro invests in public transit and related infrastructure, integrates new mobility choices, and engages communities in decisionmaking.

The Mobility Equity Cabinet represents a large part of the community engagement in Metro's strategic planning and operations and consists of residents and community leaders from neighborhoods with low incomes and communities of color that have limited access to opportunity through transportation. Participants in the Cabinet are paid \$75 an hour for their time.⁶⁷ Funding is allocated from Metro's budget.

Interviewees value the expertise contributed by all participants of the Cabinet. Although the Cabinet does not have budget and policymaking authority, Metro describes it as an intentional venue for "cocreation." One interviewee noted that for such a cabinet to truly make a difference, "[Leaders] should not underestimate the power of community, and they should not question their expertise about community and community need."

Interviewees also noted that the Equity Cabinet not only has not slowed down processes, but has actually made them more efficient.

"I think we are moving a lot farther, faster by taking the time to engage with community and, I guess, I wish we had realized that sooner. People tend to think, 'Oh, gosh. We don't have time for community engagement.' But if you do really deep engagement, you get so much farther, so much faster." —King County–area public sector interviewee

Other Initiatives in King County

Transportation equity solutions include on-demand services that operate farther from the city center. These services include Metro's Dial-a-Ride Transit, which operates on a fixed route but can also be

scheduled to pick up passengers off route. Other on-demand services include Via to Transit, Community Ride, and Ride Pingo to Transit, which specifically serve more suburban areas that may lack access to bus stops or other transit options.

Other transportation issues faced in King County brought up by interviewees include concerns about safety on and around public transportation. As one transit official stated, “A lot of people of color, people of low income—they don't perceive the system as safe to ride. Part of that's due to racism and the experience that they have on the system. Some of it is also due to fare enforcement and the way we have approached fare enforcement in the past.” The Mobility Equity Cabinet, according to participants, raised safety concerns that led directly to the development of the Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement Reform, which operates within the Mobility Equity Framework. This reform is intended to address the effects of systemic racism through decriminalizing fare evasion and centering Black, indigenous, and people of color in community engagement efforts.⁶⁸

Metro works with communities surrounding Seattle that do not have the resources for traditional transit options like buses, including areas with high numbers of manufacturing and warehouse workers. The Community Connections program connects Metro officials with local governments to develop transportation solutions suited for their communities. One example is the work Metro facilitated in the Kent Valley, an industrial area in King County.⁶⁹ Metro surveyed workers through its Have a Say program and introduced, in coordination with the City of Kent, two community ride systems—one reservation based and one shuttle on a fixed route—in addition to providing reduced fares for Vanpool riders.⁷⁰

Metro has also worked to address coordination issues between itself and other transit agencies in the region with the introduction of the unified ORCA card, which allows riders to travel relatively seamlessly between different agencies and modes of transportation. The ORCA card also offers reduced fares for those with low incomes across transit agencies in King County. The ORCA LIFT program grants reduced fares for those with a gross household income equal to 200 percent or less of the federal poverty level.⁷¹ Riders must apply for a card, which can be refilled online or at 185 retail locations.⁷² Community members and transit advocates expressed their concern that they did not want Metro to solely rely on ORCA and not allow cash fare payments because of difficulties accessing noncash payment types for those who are unbanked or underbanked.

Case Study 3: Columbus, Ohio

At the outset of the project, SDFPTI expressed particular interest in learning about transportation changes in Columbus, Ohio. In addition, among cities with a population of greater than 500,000, Columbus' low-income census tracts had the seventh-largest average decrease in transportation costs from 2012 to 2016 according to the Location Affordability Index. The city also had the fourth-largest one-year gain in accessibility to jobs by transit in the University of Minnesota's *Access across America* 2017 report (Owen and Murphy 2018).

The City of Columbus has a population of 905,748, and the metro region holds 2,138,926 residents. The city population is comparable to that of Dallas (1,304,379),⁷³ but the metro region is considerably smaller (Dallas' metro population is 7,637,387). Columbus is also slightly denser than Dallas, with a population density of roughly 4,115 people per square mile compared to 3,841 people per square mile in Dallas.

Consistent with other cities in the US, "the roadway system is the primary component of the transportation system in central Ohio" (MORPC 2020). The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the MPO covering Columbus and surrounding areas, is responsible for regional transportation planning in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Transportation. The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is the primary mass transit provider for the region, providing coverage to Franklin County and small portions of neighboring counties. The agency, which exclusively operates bus service, reported a 31-year high of over 19 million rides in 2019. COTA is primarily funded through a 0.5 percent sales tax levied in the jurisdictions that comprise COTA's service area. In 2019, the agency reported revenues of \$185.6 million dollars, including \$135.1 million dollars in sales tax revenue. The next largest revenue sources were grant funding (\$23.2 million, or 12.5 percent) and passenger fares (\$19 million, or 10.24 percent) (COTA 2020).

Columbus has made substantial gains in transportation equity, access, and innovation in the past decade. In addition to the metrics presented above, COTA received the Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award from the American Public Transportation Association in 2018 and 2020.⁷⁴ The City of Columbus also won the US Department of Transportation's Smart City Challenge in 2017.

Our research did not reveal any structural changes by major stakeholders to increase transportation equity in Columbus. The equity and access gains described above were primarily driven by an overhaul of the city's bus network, called the Transit System Redesign, with changes made on a 70–30 percent ridership-coverage split. The city has implemented various policy changes and programs

that address structural challenges, although they are not structural in nature. In addition to the Transit System Redesign, the city is collaborating with COTA and MORPC on a long-term mobility initiative called LinkUS. Not only is the initiative itself equity focused, but interviewees across sectors highlighted its community-engagement process as being particularly robust and effective at including diverse viewpoints. In part stemming from the LinkUS planning process, COTA highlighted its growth in interagency collaboration as deeply supportive of its organizational goals. In another collaboration, COTA launched the Downtown C-pass, an employee transit pass program that uses an innovative funding mechanism and serves as a testament to Columbus' culture of public-private collaboration.

Land Use History in Columbus

Prior to French colonization in the mid-17th century, the land that would eventually house Columbus was home to a diverse group of Native Americans, including the Adena, Hopewell, and Fort Ancient peoples. The city was founded in 1812 by the Ohio State Legislature, which created the centrally located city to be the new state's permanent capital. The city's population boomed in the early 1830s, after connection to the National Road—an early highway beginning in Baltimore, MD—and the Ohio and Erie Canal.⁷⁵

As in many other American cities, the period between the Great Depression and the post-World War II economic boom brought profound changes to Columbus' urban fabric. The 1936 residential security map produced by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation designated large portions of central Columbus, including the predominately Black neighborhoods of Bronzeville, Hanford Village, and Flytown, as highest risk for mortgage, or redlined. Coupled with other policy decisions at the time, these maps contributed to sustained disinvestment, including the denial of mortgages, in predominately Black neighborhoods.⁷⁶

These redlined neighborhoods were dealt another blow after the passage of the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act in 1956 and the subsequent construction of I-60 and I-70 and interstate spur route I-670. Jason Reece, an assistant professor of city and regional planning at the Ohio State University, told the *Columbus Dispatch*, "If you look at the old redlining maps of most cities—and Columbus is a good example—you can pretty much trace the highways right through those areas that were redlined."⁷⁷ Large swaths of neighborhoods were demolished and, where buildings were left standing, communities were left to grapple with neighborhoods now bisected by highways.

At the same time, these neighborhoods were devastated by racialized "urban renewal" policies. In 1950, the Columbus Planning Commission was designated as the Columbus Urban Redevelopment

Authority and was authorized to apply for funds from the federal government's Housing and Home Finance Agency (Kreitzer 1955). Bronzeville was hit particularly hard by the renewed emphasis on "urban renewal," with the city using federal funds to demolish over 100 acres of residences in the eastern portion of the neighborhood. Renamed King-Lincoln Bronzeville, the neighborhood now houses fewer than 10,000 residents, down from a peak of nearly 70,000 in the 1940s.⁷⁸

The 1950s also marked the beginning of a dramatic period of municipal annexation for Columbus, a process that would increase the city's land area fourfold from 1954 to 1972. Following World War II, Columbus faced the challenge of growing decentralization, as changes in mortgage financing, the growing popularity of the automobile, and the soon-to-be constructed Interstate Highway System all facilitated population movement to the suburbs at the expense of urban cores. To stem the tide of population loss, city officials, most famously Mayor Jack Sensenbrenner, adopted a strategy of aggressive municipal annexation tied to the provision of water and sewage service.⁷⁹ In March 1954, three months into Mayor Sensenbrenner's first term in office, the Columbus City Council passed a resolution prohibiting extensions of existing water mains "except in territories annexed to Columbus." In concert with a second, complementary council resolution and changes to Ohio state law that made annexation easier, Columbus grew from about 43 square miles in 1954 to 168.79 square miles in 1972, Sensenbrenner's last year in office.⁸⁰

The annexation campaign succeeded in protecting Columbus from the population decline that marks many other Rust Belt cities, but with the city's population growing by more than 350,000 from 1950 to 2000, the increase in land area exacerbated land use challenges related to automobile dependency and single-use development. Emblematic of those challenges, in the same period that Columbus posted its impressive population increase, the land area that made up Columbus' 1956 borders lost nearly 100,000 residents.⁸¹

Transit System Redesign (TSR)

The Transit System Redesign, which involved a total review and subsequent restructuring of COTA's bus network, went into effect May 1, 2017. The restructuring, the first since the agency's inception, reoriented the network to provide greater east-west coverage and significantly increased weekend and frequent (15 minutes or less) service (COTA 2017). However, the redesign also decreased the number of coverage-focused routes, leading to reduced service in nearby suburban areas. In 2019, COTA reported 19.1 million total rides, a 4 percent increase from the previous year and the agency's highest total since 1988 (COTA 2020).

Interviewees unanimously identified the Transit System Redesign as the change that has had the greatest impact on transportation equity in Columbus, with a local public-sector interviewee saying, “The COTA redesign has to be probably tops so far in terms of what has connected more people and moved more folks.” In addition to the Title VI analysis required by federal law, a COTA official explained that the agency involved equity in the Transit System Redesign process by measuring “how many trips and what type of service serves census block groups.... Then we identified the low-income, minority block groups. Then we basically measured how much service access they had by how many trips served every single block group and looked at the overall impact of our network.”

Despite agreeing that the Transit System Redesign significantly increased transportation access, some interviewees expressed doubt that the equity improvements were intentional. One local transportation advocate commented, “I do not think that [equity] was as explicit when the Transit System Redesign was happening.” In general, ridership-focused system redesigns can have mixed effects on equity, contingent on the degree to which ridership patterns are aligned with target populations, such as no-car households or communities of color. When the two are not aligned, such as in metropolitan areas where communities of color are distributed outside of the urban core, a ridership-focused redesign can reduce equity.

In addition, researchers at the Ohio State University’s Center for Urban and Regional Analysis found that, in the low-income neighborhood of Linden, “the [Transit System Redesign] yields ambiguous benefits for accessibility to jobs and health care.” Specifically, the researchers found that the redesigned routes in the Linden neighborhood had fewer jobs accessible within 30 minutes on weekdays. However, the redesign was associated with increased access to health care services on average, albeit with a slight decrease in OB/GYN access. In addition, CMAX, Columbus’ new pseudo-bus rapid transit system, was found to significantly increase access to both jobs and health care in Linden (Lee and Miller 2018).

LinkUS

One initiative reported by interviewees likely to help increase transportation equity in the region is LinkUS, a collaboration between MORPC, COTA, and the City of Columbus. This long-term mobility initiative takes a corridor-based approach to planning for future population growth in the Columbus metropolitan area, which is expected to be 3,000,000 by 2050. The plan is largely contingent on a sales tax ballot initiative that would provide local matching funds for COTA’s Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grants application. The ballot initiative, originally slated for November 2022, has been postponed.

Interviewees highlighted the project's commitment to equity, with a special emphasis on the equity considerations in the corridor selection process, during which a list of more than a dozen corridors was narrowed down to five. Speaking on the selection criteria, a Columbus-area public-sector interviewee explained, "There's a huge amount of criteria that goes into it, including density, housing, availability, future land use, looking at minority and low-income populations, [and] zero-car households." Another interviewee added that "we advanced corridors that we wanted to get funded based off of race inequity along those corridors."

Interviewees across sectors also highlighted the project's robust and ongoing stakeholder engagement process. These efforts included "tiered levels of engagement that were both different in scope and focus," according to one public-sector interviewee. Ultimately, this engagement was reflected in a 37-member steering committee, which complemented the smaller 16-member executive committee and itself included several members representing advocacy groups. In addition to the steering and executive committees, which maintained a systemwide focus, the process also involved local committees that tackled issues in the realm of "what traffic looks like at Main and Nelson."

"Everybody has to be on board, so it has been probably slower to get to where we are than some other communities who could just say, 'we're going to do this,' and so we have commissioned the hell out of every step of our conversation by bringing in the transit advocates, the business leaders, the elected leaders." —Columbus-area public sector interviewee

In addition to tiered community engagement, interviewees also highlighted the high level of engagement from decisionmakers. Although the exact levels of input and power sharing across the tiered levels of engagement were unclear, a transit advocate on the steering committee said, "There was somebody from the executive committee at every one of our meetings.... One of the public-sector people were at each one of our meetings, so that we did feel like we had input." In a move symbolizing the project's commitment to community input, the decision to adopt the LinkUS strategy was made during a joint meeting of both committees.

Finally, interviewees highlighted the accessibility of the meetings themselves. Due to the pandemic, LinkUS's community engagement processes went virtual, which increased access for those who

previously were unable to attend in-person meetings. In addition to being virtual, all of the steering committee meetings were recorded and made public, creating greater transparency in the project design phase.

Interagency Collaboration

The final theme that emerged from the Columbus interviews was the importance of interagency communication. In 2019, the City of Columbus and Urban Land Institute Columbus co-released *Insight2050 Corridor Concepts*, a report outlining land use scenarios for Columbus' future growth, with COTA, MORPC, and the Columbus Partnership (among others) included as partners (City of Columbus and Urban Land Institute Columbus 2019). From a regional perspective, a public-sector interviewee described the Corridor Concepts study as “a public agency trust-building process that would build the relationships and the collective vision that would then become LinkUS,” weaving together components of three separate plans largely developed in isolation. Interviewees at COTA corroborated this perspective, noting that “our LinkUS initiative is testament to our improved relations with the City of Columbus and our county.”

Although COTA is the sole public transportation provider in the City of Columbus and possesses independent taxing authority, the agency's work does not take place in a silo. Beyond its interactions with MORPC and the Ohio Department of Transportation, COTA also works with Columbus' Department of Public Service, which includes Traffic Management, among other city and state agencies. Recognizing the importance of interagency and cross-sector collaboration, COTA interviewees described a renewed focus on government relations and outreach, with one interviewee saying that “government relations was not really a role at COTA for quite some time, so that was a new position, and then a new department. There're multiple people in that position right now.” Interviewees described similar outreach to ensure transit service is preserved in the case of new development, with an interviewee describing situations “where a private development would be permitted maybe in front of a bus stop, and they wouldn't leave enough space for the shelter to stay.” In a testament to strengthened lines of communication with local governments, the interviewee went on to describe “a recent new development, [where] we were able to actually improve their bus stop from the development instead of having a loss.”

Downtown C-Pass

Another initiative mentioned by interviewees as one that led to increased transportation equity was the Downtown C-pass program, a collaboration between COTA, MORPC, and the Capital Crossroads and Discovery Special Improvement Districts. This program made employees at participating downtown businesses eligible for a free COTA monthly pass. A Columbus-area public-sector interviewee explained that the program is partially funded by a per square foot and per employee tax on participating employers, which a COTA employee described as a “first of its kind [partnership] with building owners to help pay for part of the transit pass.” In April 2022, COTA launched a pilot C-pass expansion in the Short North neighborhood, a collaboration between the agency and the Short North Alliance.

Although interviewees did not highlight the equity implications of the project, one public-sector interviewee noted that the C-pass program was successful in supporting both blue- and white-collar employees. The program is also emblematic of Columbus’ commitment to public-private partnerships, a recurring theme across all the interviews conducted.

“There was a genuine ... tipping point, where there was enough congestion, and enough lack of parking, and a need for more employees that allowed there to be that genuine conversation.” –COTA interviewee

Case Study 4: Las Vegas, Nevada

Among cities with a population greater than 500,000, Las Vegas’s low-income census tracts had the fourth-largest average decrease in transportation costs from 2012 to 2016 according to the Location Affordability Index. Both the City of Las Vegas’ population (641,903) and the metropolitan region’s population (2,228,866) are smaller than the same populations in the Dallas area (1,304,379 and 7,451,858, respectively). However, Las Vegas is more densely populated than Dallas, with 4,376 people per square mile compared to 3,841 per square mile in Dallas.

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC), Southern Nevada’s MPO, is responsible for managing federally mandated planning processes for transportation infrastructure; federal, state, and local funds; and abiding by air quality regulations.⁸² Unlike in many other metropolitan areas in the US, RTC, while being the MPO, oversees the public mass transit system in

Nevada and is also the official administrator of the Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation, in partnership with the Nevada Department of Transportation.

The City of Las Vegas is primarily responsible for securing funding for new transportation initiatives in partnership with other nearby cities, counties, and the local MPO.

“The city has partnered with multiple agencies over last 15 years to secure funding to add dozens of miles of bus rapid transit, hundreds of miles of bike lanes and transportation trails, dozens of pedestrian safety upgrades, and huge areas of sidewalk and streetlight infill to help improve transportation access and equity citywide.” —Las Vegas public sector interviewee

In addition to using sales taxes to fund transit, the region has used creative funding efforts such as fuel revenue indexing and a motor vehicle fuel tax, which give local planning agencies more flexibility to take on both maintenance and expansion of public transportation, services, and roadway funding. The motor vehicle fuel tax, which receives nine cents for every gallon of gasoline purchased in Clark County to fund roadway projects, was braided with a fuel revenue indexing measure passed in 2013 by the Nevada legislature to tie the motor vehicle fuel tax to inflation and help keep up with the material and labor costs associated with transportation projects.⁸³ Since 2014, these initiatives have jointly raised \$2.1 billion in roadway projects.⁸⁴ An employee affiliated with the city pointed out that this amount of money has been substantial in expanding the transportation investments that the city has been able to make. The RTC also received \$303 million in federal stimulus funds in 2021.⁸⁵

However, despite these creative funding sources, one public sector interviewee commented that Las Vegas has “one of the least-funded [transit] systems in the nation, yet [it is] one of the most cost-efficient.” The limited funding for transit requires a selective approach to choose which new projects are funded.

Land Use in Las Vegas

The City of Las Vegas, originally founded as a railroad stop for the Union Pacific Railroad in 1905,⁸⁶ is today primarily dominated not by rail, but by car and pedestrian use. The development of the city was further accelerated due to the construction of the Hoover Dam in the late 1930s, bringing growth

through labor migration (notably in a segregated way, as Black and Latinx workers were not allowed to work on the development). The city significantly expanded in the 1960s due to the development of the Strip casinos, which also enforced segregationist practices for entertainers and visitors (FitzGerald 2010). Freeway development of I-95 and I-15 converged, concentrating population in the downtown area. This lack of high regional density outside of the downtown area can make transit services less efficient than in denser urban areas.

Walking in Las Vegas can be hazardous due to climate-induced heat islands and a concentration of block walls around neighborhoods that can extend a seemingly short walk into a multimile endeavor.⁸⁷ Even though the region is car-centric, about 8 percent of households do not have a vehicle in Clark County.⁸⁸

Influenced by these historical land use patterns and a rapid growth of population over the past few decades, the City of Las Vegas has identified a few challenges that could be addressed to improve future land use patterns (City of Las Vegas 2021, 2-8). First, older parts of the city rely on aging commercial corridors that lack a walkable design or mixed-use elements. Second, the city has too much single-family housing and not enough multiunit house-scale buildings, which poses a challenge for the provision of affordable housing. Third, there is increasingly less unzoned land available for development, a constraint that would likely require any new significant redevelopment to be constrained to prezoned areas. This challenge is compounded by the lack of “middle family housing” in growing areas of Clark County, where air quality, water availability, lot affordability, and zoning restrictions limit the places where new multifamily properties can be built.⁸⁹ Lastly, employment is concentrated by industries and geography, and these concentrated job spots frequently require the use of a car.

Economic segregation has also historically shaped land use in Las Vegas. The Westside community is a legacy Black community that originated because of segregationist limits on where Black laborers could live in the city; it became known as the “Black Strip.”⁹⁰ This community experienced a spree of demolitions related to substandard housing in the 1940s, the effects of which can still be seen today in the form of vacant parking lots and buildings. Preexisting land use patterns typically mean that areas where new low-wage laborers relocate to because they are affordable (primarily located outside of downtown) have bigger and less walkable or bikeable street grids; fewer instances of mixed-use development; and less accessible or fewer high-frequency transit routes. In Las Vegas, where one in five Clark County residents is “foreign born” and where over a third of this foreign-born population works in the entertainment, accommodations, and food industries (McTarnaghan et al. 2020), it is important to understand how changing demographics across the city will influence gaps in transportation access.

Unrestricted Visioning with the Community

A key theme that arose from our interviews with stakeholders in Las Vegas was that when community engagement is paired with an unconstrained long-range visioning process, planning feels less like checking a box, and key priorities can emerge. Las Vegas' unconstrained long-range visioning process is separate from its mandated 5-year planning process and includes longer-range goals (to be achieved in the next 10 years or more) and short-term goals. The visioning is not constrained to ideas that are feasible within current budget constraints, and it engages community members in the early design and planning conversations. Long-term visioning processes such as Las Vegas' can help with course correction from previous plans and also provide an opportunity to be aspirational with new available federal, state, or local funds.

Unrestricted visioning community engagement exercises are important to do in addition to mandated planning processes that are fiscally constrained to one specific project because they can reveal previously unheard community priorities. For example, one Las Vegas government interviewee commented that they heard from a small selection of community members that there was interest in building light rail. After launching a large-scale community engagement effort and unrestricted visioning process that reached over 80,000 people through three surveys for the development of On Board, the region's long-range aspirational mobility plan, RTC found that community members who actually were regular transit users were not asking for rail, but instead were asking for "more frequent service and better connections to transfers." This finding led to high-capacity transit, including bus rapid transit, being ranked as one of the highest priorities by 85 percent of On Board survey respondents (RTC 2020). Without this insight, gleaned from extensive outreach efforts that included tactics like refurbishing a fixed-route bus to become a mobile outreach unit to place in key locations, funding might have been allocated to projects that were not actually helpful to vulnerable transit users. As part of this process, RTC also ranked proposed projects by how well they met regional community priorities identified during community engagement.

Investing in frequent and ongoing visioning exercises with the community is also beneficial to establishing plans and priorities in the event that new local, state, or federal funds become available. RTC employees stated that the visioning exercise conducted through the development of the On Board plan was beneficial because "with new funding available through the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law], we can go beyond [the] fiscal constraint exercise" identified in the regional planning document, and now RTC has "a framework to put these new funds out the door." Similarly, this type of preexisting information can be helpful in times of crises, as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when local

governments had only a short time to leverage unprecedented levels of flexible funding from the federal government tied to recovery efforts.

Prioritizing Communities of Color at Risk of Displacement or That Have Been Displaced

Another key theme that we heard in our interviews was that prioritizing equity in transportation initiatives requires a focus on residents of color or of low income. According to one community advocate, as downtown Las Vegas continues to grow and experience housing prices four times higher than in 2012,⁹¹ gentrification will continue to cause “lots of people to move to Boulder Highway [in southeast Las Vegas] because that was where they could now find affordable housing.... It’s an older area of town, so rent is just more affordable.”

According to the same interviewee, such displacement typically pushes lower-income renters and communities of color to older areas with fewer amenities and older infrastructure. In the case of Boulder Highway, the high car speed limit has also been associated with an elevated number of crashes and pedestrian fatalities disproportionately experienced by residents of the area.

Although addressing the root causes of gentrification and displacement requires cross-sector initiatives beyond transportation (including but not limited to housing policy, community and economic development, and land use), transportation policy can attempt to alleviate the impacts of gentrification in the short term. The Boulder Highway Coalition is one example of how to address these challenges. The group was formed spontaneously in 2015 during a community meeting on pedestrian safety. Community advocates expected only 20 people to show up, but over 80 did, including public officials. This large number of attendees surprised the community advocate we interviewed, because she was not used to seeing such a large showing at a transportation-related event. The coalition generated some short- and long-term goals, including enhancing pedestrian lighting and adding median lighting corridorwide, adding crosswalks, reducing speeds to 35 miles per hour, and implementing an alert system on cell phones for notification of pedestrian fatalities.

Interviewees said that the concerns of residents living along Boulder Highway, who could be considered a high-equity priority, have been in part supported by large-scale funding and planning. In response to the community meeting mentioned above, RTC has created dedicated bus lanes, added express routing coupled with traditional transit service, adjusted transit shelter placements, and added more lighting at stops along Boulder Highway. The City of Henderson has also acquired \$40 million from a US Department of Transportation grant to pursue the transformation of the highway into a

complete streets roadway, with a reduction of lanes, the addition of two dedicated bus lanes, and the addition of a protected bike lane.⁹²

Specific Initiatives in Las Vegas

Based on the two key methods of decisionmaking described above (unrestricted visioning and prioritizing communities of color), multiple initiatives have arisen that interviewees believed increased transportation equity in the Las Vegas region.

INVESTMENTS TO INCREASE FREQUENCY OF BUS LINES

In comparison to most metro areas in the US, Las Vegas experienced an increase in ridership on its residential routes prepandemic. The RTC experienced a ridership increase of more than 3 percent in 2019, compared to an average decrease in ridership nationwide of 0.7 percent.⁹³ Interviewees stated that this number speaks to both the high need for transit in Las Vegas and the effective investments made to increase service through boosting the frequency of popular bus lines.⁹⁴

“When you see strong productivity, strong ridership, and a history of ridership response to frequency and increases, you can be reasonably confident that making those types of relatively modest investments in just [providing] more service can help grow your network.”

—Las Vegas public sector interviewee

In 2021, the region experienced one of its largest expansions in public transit since 1992, benefiting 21,000 residents living below the poverty level.⁹⁵ These changes included the addition of two bus lines, the extension of five bus lines, and a frequency increase for five bus lines.⁹⁶

FIRST- AND LAST-MILE PROGRAMS

Communities of color and communities with low incomes whose residents are only able to live in certain neighborhoods due to housing affordability challenges should be a high priority for transit investments, but if they live outside of areas with a high population density (like a sprawling suburb), adding new bus or rail lines might not be feasible from a capital cost perspective. First- and last-mile programs aim to fill this gap between the existing transit options and an individual’s final destination.⁹⁷

Las Vegas' Silver STAR, which has operated for over two decades, is a shuttle service targeted to senior citizens and disabled individuals that has 12 lines with stops at senior living communities, grocery stores, and banks.⁹⁸ Silver STAR was expanded during the pandemic to add more pickup locations and earlier service hours, and it includes a microtransit component through its flexible demand-response service.⁹⁹

More recently, RTC created a new microtransit zone in the southwest of the city to address remaining transit gaps and supplement fixed routes for short trips for all residents, with one-way trips accessible at \$2.¹⁰⁰ This microtransit initiative provides rides within the zone and to the edge of the zone at bus routes that connect to the rest of the city, and will serve a 32-square-mile zone to better connect residents to the rest of the network. Both of these programs apply a structural equity lens by shifting resources and capital to reach potential riders disconnected from existing transportation and transit options.

Regions with a high number of jobs to offer residents across a sprawling region can benefit from partnerships with the business community to form first- and last-mile programs. As one RTC employee pointed out, "It is about a one- to two-mile gap from where our system stops to where the major job centers are." This mismatch can result in prohibitive transportation costs for low-wage workers. Lyft, the ride-share company, has been a beneficial business partner for RTC. RTC and Lyft conducted a pilot that is an on-demand subsidized ride-share service in which qualified veterans can hail any one-way ride that normally would cost less than \$30 free of charge.¹⁰¹ Another business partnership RTC has pursued to connect a geographic area that was not previously well connected to transit services is the Workforce Mobility Program.¹⁰² This program, which is subsidized by Lyft, RTC, and an employer in North Las Vegas, provides rides that connect 13 existing RTC bus stops to a job site at the Northgate Distribution Center, with about 15 to 20 percent of employees at this job site being projected to benefit from this pilot. Other large employers locating new warehouses or job sites in Las Vegas have sought similar pilots with RTC. These partnerships are a helpful way both to involve the business community in innovatively closing transportation gaps and to partially address job-to-worker spatial mismatches.

SAFETY AND PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION INITIATIVES

Interviewees noted that pedestrian safety is a big concern in Las Vegas, particularly for vulnerable road users who do not have the luxury to choose their mode of transportation for various financial or access reasons.

“The city has a terrible pedestrian safety problem.... Vulnerable road users [or people who have no choice but to walk, bike, and use buses as a primary form of transportation] so far this year [2020] made up 72 percent of the total pedestrian fatalities in Southern Nevada.”
—Las Vegas nonprofit interviewee

No matter how robust new or expanded transit services are, if people do not feel safe using the system, ridership will be low and equity improvements will be limited. So, pedestrian safety is an important aspect of the long-term sustainability and viability of any new transportation or transit investments, especially as lack of safe walkable spaces disproportionately affects communities of color (Freemark, Gwam, and Noble 2022).

Through combined partnerships between the City of Las Vegas and RTC, significant improvements have been implemented for the safety of pedestrians near bus stops, including moving 1,133 bus shelters back five feet away from the curb and installing bollards in front of 20 high-traffic bus shelters.¹⁰³ Additionally, they have installed freestanding solar-powered traffic lights to aid in driver visibility of pedestrians at night, when most pedestrian fatalities occur in the area, and installed new bus shelters for stops that did not have them previously. These safety improvements have been a part of a decade-long effort supported by the expertise of the RTC Bus Shelter and Bench Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations on issues related to bus shelters and benches located within the Las Vegas Valley and is composed partially of citizen members.¹⁰⁴ Additional improvements include purchasing right-of-way at bus stops and collaborating with private land owners to increase the safety of bus stops, especially at locations with high traffic volumes or allowed driving speeds.¹⁰⁵

These safety investments are also a good example of how to combine a variety of local, state, and federal funds to achieve a coordinated goal. Although the moving of bus shelters back was funded by the state’s motor vehicle fuel tax and other local appropriations, the building of new shelters was partially funded by the Federal Transit Administration’s Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program.¹⁰⁶ The City of Las Vegas aims to continue taking advantage of federal opportunities to prioritize pedestrian and transit rider safety through the not-yet-implemented Vision Zero Action Plan.¹⁰⁷

One additional way advocates in Las Vegas have been thinking of pedestrian safety is how to empower the pedestrian, especially through an equity lens (notably not a structural one due to its focus

on individuals). One community advocate, for example, described PED SAFE, a course hosted under the Vulnerable Road Users Project.¹⁰⁸ The course focuses “on how road design and human behavior play an equal role” in the problem of auto-pedestrian crashes. Although not a structural solution, the course spotlights the disproportionate numbers of people of color who receive pedestrian citations and who are least likely to be able to afford them, as well as how infrastructural racism leads to uneven levels of safety across neighborhoods in the same city. The court-ordered pedestrian diversion education class provides an equitable way for low-income or people of color to learn about pedestrian safety and reduces “the burden of citation fines and fees.”

Recommendations for Increasing Transportation Equity in Dallas and Other Cities

These case studies show that to address the root causes of transportation inequities in a city, leaders must change the systems in which transportation decisions are made. These structural changes to the system will then lead to individual initiatives and policies that address the needs of people of color, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, and other historically excluded groups by shifting decisionmaking power to these groups and centering solutions in holistic equity frameworks.

Based on what we learned from these case studies, we have identified the following recommendations that leaders in Dallas and other regions could implement to increase transportation equity.

For Local Governments and MPOs

CREATE A MOBILITY EQUITY COUNCIL

As a first step toward increasing transportation equity, DART should consider creating a mobility equity council, which is a group of residents and community leaders from neighborhoods with low incomes and communities of color that helps to cocreate a policy framework and update transportation policies to center equity and sustainability. Such an equity council would live within DART and would be funded by DART as well. Members would be recruited through an open application process, meet once a month, and get paid for their time (King County Metro pays its members \$75 an hour).

Multiple interviewees pointed to an equity council or cabinet as the number one recommendation they would give leaders in Dallas to distribute decisionmaking power to the communities most affected by transportation decisions.

“I think the most important thing would be for [DART] to propose something like our Mobility Equity Cabinet. The reason I suggest that is that I think to really make a difference in this space, you need the community expertise, and that community expertise has to be informed by the realities of the system.” —King County-area public sector interviewee

To ensure that such a council is not just another siloed group and therefore a vehicle for further marginalization and frustration, members should be given power in transportation decisionmaking in the region. They should also be closely connected with high-level leadership and other transit decisionmaking bodies (such as the citizen’s advisory committee discussed below) to ensure that they are central to all decisions made within the system.

“Having dedicated equity staff and an equity cabinet, I think, are really valuable. I think, hopefully, you have at least one or two elected leaders that are champions of the work that can budget it and push it forward and make sure that those things come as real recommendations, not just kind of a checkbox. I think, ideally, it’s kind of codified to be a decisionmaking body, at least advisory body, but I think at least putting it on par with other kind of community advisory groups, if those exist.” —King County-area public sector interviewee

REVAMP THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE AND LINKED TO THE EQUITY COUNCIL

Although a mobility equity council is a first step toward increasing transportation equity in the region, in order to make broadscale changes, interviewees from our case study regions said there must be buy-in from the larger community, including people from areas with higher incomes and business leaders. If

Dallas would like to increase equity in the region, we recommend that it revamps the current Citizens Advisory Committee to include representation from the equity council, business leaders, community members and leaders from other parts of the region, and transportation experts to identify ways in which recommendations made by the equity council and other equity-focused initiatives could be put into practice on a larger scale and receive buy-in from the larger community. This revamping could help ensure that the mobility equity council is not siloed but is instead a core part of all decisionmaking in the region.

For engagement around specific topic areas, DART could create technical advisory committees that have equity council representation. These smaller advisory committees would help to advance short-term goals, while the mobility equity council and the Citizens Advisory Committee could drive long-term engagement and equity. DART should ensure that these groups have joint decisionmaking power and that there is equitable representation on each group, such as ensuring that the Citizens Advisory Committee includes a proportional number of renters as the service area population, as well as transit riders. DART should also work to ensure that the committees and councils are racially and ethnically representative of the overall population and that they have representation from each council district.

CREATE A MOBILITY EQUITY FRAMEWORK OR TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

If the region would like to increase transportation equity, it could also create a mobility equity framework or transportation justice framework to complement the city's 2021 strategic mobility plan, with the process led by the equity council. A transportation justice framework is an internal framework for centering transportation justice in everything an agency does. In the absence of an overarching framework, equity initiatives run the chance of being disorganized and targeted toward short-term immediate needs rather than addressing the root causes of structural inequities.

To create the justice framework, DART could follow a process similar to the one used in Portland, in which PBOT commissioned an internal, 60-page research paper on transportation justice and developed documents on what transportation justice means and how to operationalize it into departmental practices. PBOT then held a kickoff for the framework organized as a retreat with PBOT staff and CBO members, allowing them real time to build trust, get to know each other, and move the framework into action.

DO THE INTERNAL WORK TO BECOME AN AUTHENTIC, ANTIRACIST AGENCY

Another requirement we heard from the case study cities that intentionally increased equity was that equity must be a core part of every decision, not just a part of a few decisions looking to address

inequities. If Dallas wants to address the structural inequities within its transportation system and its region more broadly, it should weigh equity in all of its decisionmaking rather than basing decisions on density or ridership alone.

One thing that must happen before this goal is achieved is for DART and partner agencies to look within and reflect on how past efforts both within the agency and in other agencies and departments within the city and region have affected equity. Only after such reflection should it take the next step, making concerted efforts to create a culture of equity and antiracism within the agency by doing things such as increasing the focus on equity in hiring and on the board; expanding departments of diversity and inclusion to go beyond engagement with minority- and women-owned businesses and focusing on a broader mission of equity throughout the entire system; and centering equity in the overall strategic plan. It should also grow the agency's capacity to hear and receive feedback and acknowledge past harms.

IMPROVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

In addition to creating processes for centering equity in decisionmaking, leaders in the region should also enhance their community engagement efforts so that decisionmaking includes communities with low incomes, communities of color, people with disabilities, and other groups that are transit dependent or have been historically excluded from decisionmaking and opportunity. Such inclusion requires two related efforts. First, inclusion means shifting away from only collecting public comment or conducting community engagement on plans or policies that have already been drafted, designed, or budgeted for. Second, it means investing in deep and meaningful engagement with these communities to build trust and better understand their needs long before proposed solutions are on the table.

Some specific recommendations about how DART and other transit agencies could improve community engagement efforts include the following:

- To increase equity and close gaps in outcomes, community engagement efforts should prioritize engaging with people with low incomes, people of color, and other historically excluded community members. People with low incomes are less likely to have the time or resources needed for a trip to a meeting, but steps can be taken to increase the likelihood they attend and contribute to the process. These steps could include hosting events in locations they already regularly visit (such as rec centers, schools, or service locations) or partnering with grassroots organizations or CBOs that regularly serve or interact with these populations. Hiring local residents to conduct outreach with communities of color and communities with low incomes is another way to increase inclusion for community engagement.

- Work with CBOs to do community engagement, and support these organizations through methods similar to the Transportation Justice Partnership Program in Portland, which is a two-year partnership with nonprofits and “equity-centered consultants” to support transportation justice policy development and program implementation on an as-needed basis. This program allows PBOT to compensate CBOs for their support and help them build their capacity. The program’s request for proposal offered up to 35 price agreements, each with a maximum value of \$100,000 (City of Portland 2020).
- Provide multiple options for discussion and input. Online participation in community engagement can be skewed toward people with higher incomes and people who are white and exclude people who do not have access to computers or broadband. But it can also provide an opportunity for input for people who are unable to travel to in-person meetings because they are immunocompromised or face other constraints, such as child care duties or a lack of transportation. Therefore, providing both in-person and online engagement options can help increase the likelihood that everyone is able to participate. Moreover, providing several discussion opportunities, including small sessions for people with similar backgrounds (e.g., people who all speak a language other than English), can help increase the likelihood that participants feel comfortable engaging. All related expenses should be included during community engagement budget planning so that they are adequately covered.
- After input has been analyzed and decisions have been made, follow up with community members in person and online about those decisions, next steps, and their experiences with the engagement process. A lack of transparency about what happens after engagement can erode the trust that was developed during the process. Building long-term trust and increasing transparency with community members require that they have a clear understanding of next steps, including how their input was acted on and what the timeline is for implementation.
- Track and monitor in real time how inclusive the community engagement processes are. For example, DART should collect data on the demographics of participants to see whether each group represents the population as a whole, or even better, overrepresents groups that have been historically marginalized and excluded from decisionmaking. They should also host in-depth discussions and focus groups with community members to better understand which parts of the process worked and which could be improved.

Leaders in the region should also ensure that they are engaging community both for specific and localized issues and for larger, longer-term equity goals. One method to do this is to use a tiered community engagement strategy, similar to the one used in Columbus in which, in addition to the

steering and executive committees that maintained a systemwide focus, the process involved local committees that tackled issues in the realm of “what traffic looks like at Main and Nelson.”

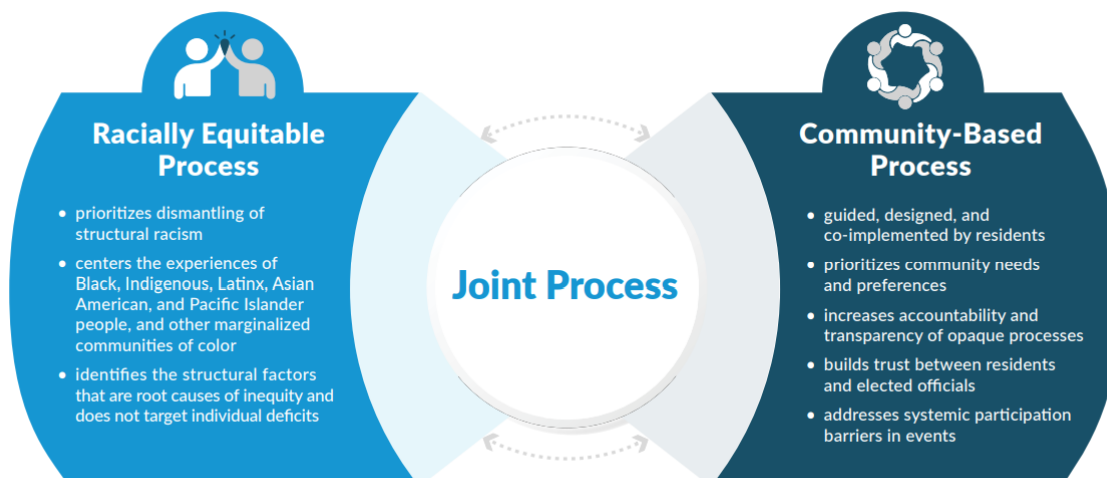
If community engagement is done in a noninclusive manner, it can serve to lift the voices of those who already hold power and opportunity and reinforce existing inequities. Therefore, ensuring that community engagement is specifically targeted at communities of color and communities with low incomes is absolutely necessary to increasing equity. However, even genuine community engagement does not ensure racial equity (box 2).

BOX 2

Joining Community Engagement with Racial Equity

The processes of racial equity and community engagement are complementary, but not synonymous. Local governments and planning agencies that seek to prioritize racial equity in the absence of a robust community engagement plan will inevitably pursue initiatives that aim to address racial disparities, but that have not been vetted by community members and that exclude the most marginalized members of communities of color, such as renters, from planning processes.

For any government considering new equity initiatives, it is important to consider how to strategically combine the approach of racial equity, or centering the experiences of community members of color, with community-engaged principles, including ceding decisionmaking power. The process of joining any racial equity initiative with effective community engagement will yield a number of benefits, as shown below.



Source: Sonia Torres Rodríguez, Mikaela Tajo, Shamoia Washington, and Kimberly Burrowes, “Changing Power Dynamics among Researchers, Local Governments, and Community Members” (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2022).

COORDINATE ACROSS LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In order to support a robust transportation infrastructure, regions need to be dense and walkable so that busses and other forms of transportation are cost efficient (i.e., there are enough riders to support a given bus line). Therefore, transit leaders need to coordinate with housing and land use leaders to create a land use pattern that supports transit lines. And, transit leaders should coordinate with housing and land use leaders to ensure that transit stops are located near planned housing developments (particularly affordable housing developments) to ensure that people with low incomes and people of color have access to affordable housing in high transit areas.

Additionally, transportation and land use leaders should coordinate with community and economic development agencies (and the private sector) to bring jobs that residents want into neighborhoods with low access to jobs, like South Dallas. Many stakeholders in South Dallas noted a need for not only transportation options to get them to jobs that are outside of South Dallas, but also new jobs in South Dallas that are skills matched to the residents and that do not bring with them gentrification and displacement. The best way to ensure that economic development in South Dallas is matched to the needs of residents is to incorporate resident voice into community and economic development decisionmaking, as is suggested above in the transportation realm. This can be done through the use of equity councils and frameworks within the economic development space, similar to the suggestions above.

USE NEW FUNDING SOURCES TO EXPAND EQUITY-FOCUSED INITIATIVES

Leaders in Dallas should also consider using new funding sources to expand equity-focused initiatives. For instance, leaders in the region could explore the possibility of braiding a motor vehicle fuel tax with a fuel revenue indexing measure, similar to the ones passed in 2013 by the Nevada legislature, or consider Columbus’ method of using a per square foot and per employee tax on participating employers to help fund transit passes.

Leaders in the region could also apply for new federal funding, such as the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program,¹⁰⁹ which could help ensure that the I-30 Canyon Project successfully reconnects North and South Dallas in a way that responds to the needs of the residents of South Dallas.

This funding source provides resources to incorporate land use planning, community engagement, and safety and walkability into the process.

When considering any new source of funding for transit, however, leaders should consider whether the method of collecting the funds is equitable—in other words, whether it is progressive (takes a larger percentage of funds from high-income groups than from low-income groups) or regressive (takes a larger percentage of income from low-income groups than from high-income groups). Sales taxes, for example, are regressive and place the highest burden on those with low and no incomes. Other forms of funding for transportation are less regressive, such as property taxes and motor vehicle excise taxes. Least regressive (or most progressive) are income taxes (Litman 2022b).

USE DATA TO TARGET PROJECTS AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Leaders in the region should use data to target investments to areas that will most increase access to opportunity for people with low incomes, people of color, and transit-dependent riders. This targeting means directing investments not only to areas where these people live, but also to areas where they need to go for work, shopping, health care, and community activities.

A first step to targeting investments toward equity is using neighborhood level data to identify areas with high concentrations of people with low incomes, people of color, people with disabilities, and any other group identified in the region as historically oppressed or excluded from decisionmaking. Then, leaders can calculate access to opportunity metrics by neighborhood and overlay these metrics with the data on the location of historically excluded populations to identify areas in most need of investment. These metrics can be calculated for both peak and off-peak hours to better understand the needs of people who work irregular schedules, and they can be used to calculate gaps in access to opportunity by race to be tracked over time as equity investments are made. More details about available datasets for these calculations are in the section below titled “Support Local Government Data Needs.”

CONSIDER DECRIMINALIZING JAYWALKING AND RECONSIDER THE ROLE OF FINES AND FEES IN ENFORCING SAFE PEDESTRIAN BEHAVIOR

Due to structural factors, including the disproportionate lack of safe, well-lit, and designated crossing intersections in neighborhoods with larger concentrations of residents of color, communities of color are more likely to live in areas where jaywalking is almost a necessity, especially for residents who must walk or take public transit in their day-to-day routines.¹¹⁰ Jaywalking fees and police enforcement have also been shown to disproportionately target Black and Latinx residents, building on the racist history of

municipal fines and fees to attempt to control the behavior of Black laborers in the post-emancipation era (Jones 2018). In our research, the Las Vegas PED SAFE initiative was one example of how financial penalties for jaywalking can be reduced or eliminated by having those cited with jaywalking offenses take a course on pedestrian safety. At the state level, Governor Steve Sisolak signed a law in March 2021 that changed jaywalking from a criminal offense punishable by up to six months of jail time and up to a \$1,000 fine to a civil penalty with no more than a \$100 fee.¹¹¹

For State Governments and the Federal Government

In addition to the final recommendation above, which applies to actors above the local level, our case studies pointed to a few other ways in which states and the federal government can help to increase transportation equity in metropolitan regions like Dallas.

CRAFT GRANT FUNDING TO ALLOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO PRIORITIZE EQUITY IN ADDITION TO RIDERSHIP

The federal government could increase equity at the local level by ensuring that the scoring rubric for federal grants does not force local leaders to prioritize density and ridership over equity. For example, interviewees noted that Federal Transit Administration grants did not allow them to put rapid transit lines in lower-income communities because density and other criteria outweighed equity.

In addition, because many grants to local governments for transportation are competitive opportunities, equity in the application process is critical. This means not just equity for smaller localities, but also equity for CBOs within larger localities. The federal government should conduct outreach and build connections to community organizations and allow these organizations, not just local governments, to be the prime awardees of grants, or at least encourage local governments to partner with CBOs to receive the awards. This change could ensure that community groups have power in the planning process.

Federal grants should also require that transportation and land use elements are planned together, as without inclusive and equitable land use policies, transportation investments will not lead to equitable outcomes.

Another important component of prioritizing equity is allowing entities sufficient time and planning dollars to conduct deep and meaningful community engagement before having to propose solutions. Although this practice may mean taking longer to turn dollars into action, allowing grant recipients

plenty of time to engage in deep and meaningful community engagement and equity analyses is critical to ensuring that the final uses increase equity.

SUPPORT LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA NEEDS

Finally, the federal and state governments can help to increase transportation equity by providing the data and/or capacity at the local level needed to use data to make equity-focused decisions.

Interviewees noted that a key challenge is producing and accessing the data that will help measure progress toward equitable outcomes.

“We want to make data-driven decisions. We want to center racial equity. We have struggled to really have the datasets that allow us to do that.” –Portland-area public sector interviewee

Although many transit agencies have created datasets that allow them to identify areas of need, increasing transportation equity is about more than targeting investments into underinvested neighborhoods. It is about creating cohesive structures that allow people of color, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, and other historically excluded groups to get to opportunity. Local leaders need access to opportunity metrics that look at not just how close someone is to a transit stop, but how many opportunities people can reach within a specific time frame, like 30 minutes.

Sometimes, increasing equity means putting transit stops into higher-income communities so that people in disinvested communities can get to the opportunities in those higher-income communities. Therefore, local leaders need to have data not just on where people with lower incomes, people of color, and people with disabilities live, but also where they work, where they go to school, where they go to the doctor, and where the other services are that they need. These metrics should be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by disability status, by income, and by other characteristics identified by the community to ensure that the investments are closing those gaps.

Many groups across the country have taken steps to track and measure this type of access to opportunity. Stacy and colleagues (2020) at the Urban Institute worked with local leaders in four metropolitan regions to create a set of transportation equity metrics that measures job accessibility for low-wage workers by using a weighted combination of the traffic-adjusted drive time (for the share of

people in the block group who commute via car) and public transit time (for the share of people in the block group who commute via public transit) in each block group, divided by the number of other low-wage job seekers competing for each job. They also created an interactive data tool that leaders in the four regions can use to create policies and target investments to increase equity in access to opportunity.¹¹² The tool also allows leaders to compare peak and off-peak access to opportunity (to help target investments toward people who work irregular hours) and track gaps in access by race and ethnicity.

TransitCenter also released a transit equity dashboard for six cities (with more coming soon) that looks at metrics like the number of jobs people can reach within a limited time frame or budget (not adjusted for competition), travel times to hospitals and grocery stores, and service frequency, and tracks how these measures have changed in each region.¹¹³

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing tool also features two transit-related indexes: the Transit Trips Index, which ranks the likelihood that residents use public transit; and the Low Transportation Cost Index, which ranks the cost of transit as a percentage of income of renters. Both indexes draw from the Location Affordability Index, which uses numerous socioeconomic variables to model housing and transit behavior for eight household profiles, and then uses the modeled behavior to estimate transportation and housing costs by census tract based on the proportion of each household type in the tract.¹¹⁴ However, these indexes have not been updated since 2019.

The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing + Transportation Affordability Index similarly models transit behavior based on socioeconomic and transit variables to estimate the combined cost of housing and transportation by census block group.¹¹⁵ The Center for Neighborhood Technology has built on the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index to create AllTransit Metrics, which broadens the focus beyond transit costs to include metrics related to access to jobs, health, equity, transit quality, and mobility.¹¹⁶ The equity metrics include the percentage of households (disaggregated by income, tenure, and vehicle ownership), people (disaggregated by race and educational attainment), and low-income building and unit locations near transit and high-frequency transit. Although these metrics look at the racial, educational attainment, income, tenure, and vehicle ownership composition of the block group, they do not analyze discrepancies by these groups, and they only look at access to opportunities via transit alone, without accounting for multimodal transportation or automobile transportation in areas with limited public transportation. Additionally, they do not account for competition for jobs and other opportunities, meaning that the metrics will be biased toward higher numbers in more dense

areas where there are more jobs and more people competing for those jobs. Finally, although data at the census-designated place level are free, data at lower levels of geography, like census tract, are not.

Numerous studies have also evaluated the equity of transportation in cities on the dimension of access to economic opportunity. For instance, Griffin and Sener (2016) analyze the equity of the public transit systems in nine large US cities at the block group level, defined as the difference in the percentage of low-wage workers that can access a given block group via transit and the total number of workers who can access transit. The authors then aggregate the block group equity measures to the core-based statistical area to produce regionwide equity metrics. Yeganeh and colleagues (2018) evaluate the Gini Index of access to jobs via public transit as well as the difference in access for people who are low income and nonwhite and high-income white. They find that people who are low-income nonwhite have higher access to transit, likely due to housing policy that concentrated nonwhite residents in city centers coupled with white families moving to the suburbs and increasing car ownership. Grengs, Levine, and Shen (2013) specifically explore access for transit-dependent, minority, and low-income populations to jobs as well as nonwork destinations. Many studies evaluate access to nonwork destinations. Apparicio and Séguin (2006), for example, look at access to “various urban resources” for public housing residents via public transit.

The Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota completed a report titled *Access across America* in 2017 and again in 2019 that estimates the accessibility to jobs by transit and walking for each of the US’s 11 million census blocks and analyzes these data in the 50 largest (by population) metropolitan areas (Owen and Murphy 2018, 2020). Travel times by transit are calculated using detailed pedestrian networks and full transit schedules for the 7:00 to 9:00 AM period, but they do not account for competition for jobs, nor do they look at equity of access.

Other tools also measure transportation equity, such as the Spatial Equity Data Tool, which can measure disparities not just in transportation investments and locations, but in other types of investments as well, such as broadband, playgrounds, and polling places.¹¹⁷ Opportunities also exist to use innovative data sources and methodologies to track access to opportunity and transportation equity. For instance, Stacy and colleagues measured spatial mismatch by using job search data from Snagajob, an hourly job search engine¹¹⁸. And a suite of private companies, including StreetLight, Hitachi, and Cambridge Systematics, is using artificial intelligence and/or cell phone data to measure transportation access and equity.¹¹⁹ However, these data are often proprietary and therefore inaccessible to local governments and community-based groups.

Federal, state, and local leaders should incorporate an evaluation component into new policies and interventions that involve data such as those described above and community-engaged research methods. These evaluations could help to inform resource allocation in the future. They can also be brought back to the community to provide a starting point for stakeholder discussions about refinements and improvements.

A Pivotal Moment for Structural Change

This is a pivotal moment for equity in South Dallas. Leaders in the Dallas region have the opportunity to dismantle racist infrastructure systems and restructure in a way that increases inclusion and access to opportunity for residents who have experienced oppression. Restructuring the ways in which decisions are made to center the voices of transit-dependent riders and people of color and to center equity in all decisions will create flexible systems that can evolve to address the needs of residents as they arise. Individual policies and programs can help to address short-term inequities, but to rectify the structural problems that created these inequities in the first place, the region needs to change the structure in which decisions are made.

Appendix

Interview Protocol for Dallas City Leaders

Background

- Could you please tell us about your role and what your work entails?
- Could you please share what your involvement has been in transportation policy?

Challenges

- What are some of the main barriers that residents in South Dallas face to accessing opportunity through transportation?
- The Dallas metro area has a largely car-centric transportation system. What are some of the roadblocks you see to the expansion of public transit and micromobility more broadly in the region?
 - » [Based on responses] Is it a lack of political will? Financing? Construction and logistical barriers? Are some of these challenges more pressing than others?

Interventions in Dallas

- What policies, programs, and investments have [you/leaders in the Dallas region] already tried to implement to address the lack of access to opportunity through transportation in the region, particularly in South Dallas?
 - » Which initiative passed/happened and which did not? Why did they/did they not move forward?
 - » Are there any initiatives aimed at connecting households without vehicles to affordable options for getting their own car?
- What are the reasons for not attempting other initiatives, like expanded public transit, micromobility, investments into walkability and pedestrian safety, etc.? We're particularly

interested here in widescale initiatives and policies that address the structural barriers to opportunity in the region.

- » Is it that leaders don't see a need for it? Is it budget constraints? Is it that there isn't the political will?
- We've learned of privately financed programs like Southern Dallas Link SUV that coordinate work pickup and drop-off for employees. Do you think there's potential for or interest in public funds supporting services like this? Or do you think there are better alternatives to these services?
- Can you share more about the DART GoLink pilot and its impacts? Do you think it was successful? Do you think it will be made permanent? Why or why not?
 - » One challenge we heard about GoLink is its mobile or online payment systems, which don't allow for payment with cash. What solutions do you think government can offer for cash users?

Potential Interventions in Dallas

- What types of initiatives would you like to try but haven't been able to get off the ground?
 - » What are some of the roadblocks that have impeded these initiatives?
- Are there other cities that you think have done a good job at increasing transportation equity that you'd like to emulate or learn from? Is there anything else you'd like to tell us that we haven't already discussed?
- Are there other people you think we should speak with about this topic?

Interview Protocol for Dallas Community Leaders

Background

- Could you tell us a bit about where you work and your role there?
 - » [For people who work voluntarily on these topics:] Could you tell us about your work on transportation equity in South Dallas, if it's separate from your full-time job?

Challenges

- What are some of the main barriers that residents in South Dallas face to accessing opportunity through transportation?
- What are some of the roadblocks you see to the expansion or creation of services that could help increase access to enhanced transportation options in South Dallas?
 - » [Based on responses] Is it a lack of political will? Financing? Construction and logistical barriers? Are some of these challenges more pressing than others?
- Could you please walk us through a typical experience with transportation in South Dallas? For instance, a trip to the grocery store or to work—what does that experience look like from door to destination?
 - » What specific transportation challenges or barriers do you face? (e.g., car ownership, safe sidewalks and pedestrian safety, traffic, public transit route frequency, route coverage, connectedness between major destinations, cost, last-mile coverage, etc.)
 - » What in your transportation system works well?
 - » How has the pandemic affected transportation systems in the area?

Interventions in Dallas

- What is your sense of what government officials have tried to do to address public transit needs?
 - » How successful have these initiatives been? Were there ones that were tried but not passed? If so, why do you think they didn't succeed?
- Can you share more about the DART GoLink pilot and its impacts on your transit experience or the transit experience of residents in South Dallas more broadly?
- We've learned of privately funded programs like LINK SUV, which coordinate employee drop-off and pickup at work sites. What are your thoughts on employer-based transit programs like this?
- Additional questions on specific government programs as we learn more from government interviews.

Potential Interventions in Dallas

- What have officials not tried that you'd like them to try? Has anyone tried to get them to do this already? If so, why did it not move forward?

Questions for Case Study City Leaders

Section I: Context

- Can you please share a brief overview of your background and your current role and responsibilities?
- Can you tell us a bit about the recent history of transportation access in your region? What has transportation been like in [your community/targeted neighborhood] over time? What have ridership patterns been like?

Section II: Identification of policies and initiatives

- Your region has undertaken a number of initiatives and policy changes to increase access to transportation in underserved neighborhoods. Can you tell me about the initiatives that you think had the greatest impact on increasing access to opportunity for people of color and people with low incomes?
- Are any of these structural changes in access to transportation? That is, were there particular initiatives that increased transportation access broadly to communities of color and communities with low incomes in a way that is sustainable over time? We'd like to distinguish between these larger changes and smaller one-off programs that only serve a subset of the population.

POLICY INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTED

- Let's hone in on one or two of the initiatives or policy changes that you think had the greatest impact on reducing inequities in access to transportation broadly (i.e., those structural changes). What were the main goals for these initiatives/policies?
 - » What was the catalyst for these policy changes and initiatives? Had you tried anything else before? How did you decide on these specific initiatives?

- » *Probe:* Was there community engagement to inform these decisions?
- What were the things that helped these initiatives/policies get passed and implemented properly?
 - » Were there community groups advocating for these changes? Leaders that pushed for them? Economic opportunities that led to these changes?
- What were the main challenges faced during implementation?
 - » *Probe:* Community resistance, policymaker resistance, communication to residents of available services, infrastructure delays, funding?
 - » How did you address these challenges?
- Did equity play a role in decisionmaking for this initiative? How did equity issues influence the design and implementation of the intervention?
 - » Were there specific equity considerations that were important due to the community/neighborhood you were intending to reach?
 - If so, were there any trade-offs or competing priorities that had to be balanced?
 - » Were there any efforts to ensure community buy-in?

Section III: Lessons learned and plans for the future

- What parts of these interventions/policies do you think worked the best and why?
- What recommendations would you give to other cities thinking about implementing similar changes?
- Looking back, do you believe these were the right decisions? Is there anything that should have been done differently?
- Are there areas for improvement? Do you have plans for complementary or new [policy change/interventions]?
 - » *Probe:* Expansion of intervention in same neighborhood, expansion of intervention into other neighborhoods, a new innovative intervention?

- If you had a magic wand, what else is needed to address transit access needs in [your community/targeted neighborhood]?

Questions for Case Study Community Leaders

Section I: Context

- Can you please share a brief overview of your background and your current role and responsibilities?
 - » *Probe:* What kinds of communities do you work with/represent?
- Can you tell us a bit about the recent history of transportation access in your region? What has transportation been like in [your community/targeted neighborhood] over time? What have ridership patterns been like?

Section II: Identification of policies and initiatives

- Your region has undertaken a number of initiatives and policy changes to increase access to transportation in underserved neighborhoods. Can you tell me about the initiatives that you think had the greatest impact on increasing access to opportunity for people of color and people with low incomes?
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 - » What was the catalyst for these policy changes and initiatives? Had anything else been tried before? How were these decisions made?

- » *Potential probe:* Was there community engagement to inform these decisions?
- What were the things that helped these initiatives/policies get passed and implemented properly?
 - » Were there community groups advocating for these changes? Leaders that pushed for them? Economic opportunities that led to these changes?
- What were the main challenges faced during implementation?
 - » *Probe:* Community resistance, policymaker resistance, communication to residents of available services, infrastructure delays, funding?
 - » How were these addressed?
- Did equity play a role in decisionmaking for this initiative? How did equity issues influence the design and implementation of the intervention?
 - » Were there specific equity considerations that were important due to the community/neighborhood were intended to reach?
 - If so, were there any trade-offs or competing priorities that had to be balanced?

Section III: Lessons learned and plans for the future

- What parts of these interventions/policies do you think worked the best and why?
- What recommendations would you give to other cities thinking about implementing similar changes?
- Are there areas for improvement? Are there plans for complementary or new [policy change/interventions]?
 - » *Probe:* Expansion of intervention in same neighborhood, expansion of intervention into other neighborhoods, a new innovative intervention?
- If you had a magic wand, what else is needed to address transit access needs in [your community/targeted neighborhood]?

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