Transportation and Social Equity: Challenges and Approaches

Washington State Transportation Commission

November 17, 2015
There is no common, agreed-upon definition or set of values for fairness or equity principles.

At its most basic definition, equity is about ensuring that all people have access to resources and opportunities to thrive.

**Transportation equity** considerations focus on:
- the disparate benefits and impacts of transportation investments and funding sources on different socioeconomic populations
- outcomes that repair inequities of past transportation decisions

Incorporating equity into decision-making
- Decision-makers often interpret equity in different ways such as emphasis on socio-economic factors, geographic fairness, access to all modes and generational factors
Equity is not Equality

**Equality** is about providing individuals with the **equal access** to goods, services and opportunities, **regardless of needs** or socioeconomic status.

**Equity** acknowledges that some groups **face problems** created by deep-rooted or historical injustices that limit them from accessing what they need; thus, they **require additional resources** to help reduce these systemic barriers.

King County Equity and Social Justice Annual Report
The Futures Task Force - Equity Dimensions of Transportation Funding
# Federal Requirements

## Protected Classes:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Justice Order</th>
<th>Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act</th>
<th>FHWA Title VI Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>Minority and low-income populations</td>
<td>Race, color, or national origin</td>
<td>Race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low-income, and limited English proficiency</td>
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## Goal:

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<td>Identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations</td>
<td>Prohibit discrimination in programs receiving Federal assistance</td>
<td>Ensure that funding recipients comply with Title VI and related civil rights authorities</td>
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FHWA 2015 Environmental Justice Reference Guide
VISION 2040, adopted in 2008, is the region’s policy-level land use, economic development, and transportation strategy for the region to accommodate an increase of 1.3 million people and 1.1 million jobs by 2040.

Equity considerations are featured in many of the multicounty planning policies related to transportation, housing, economy and public services

Transportation Policies:

T-24 Implement transportation programs and projects in ways that prevent or minimize negative impacts to low-income, minority, and special needs populations.

T-25 Ensure mobility choices for people with special transportation needs, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, the young, and low-income populations.
When PSRC developed and adopted Transportation 2040, it included an environmental justice summary which describes how the updated Transportation 2040 affects low-income and minority residents, as well as other vulnerable populations.

*Environmental justice means that people with low-incomes and minority residents benefit from public investments and do not shoulder the negative effects disproportionately.*

- involves developing transportation projects that benefit low-income or minority communities
- emphasizes ways to involve affected communities throughout a transportation project’s development.
Planning for people with Special Needs

PSRC makes an effort to address how Transportation 2040 affects special needs populations.

“Special needs” transportation populations are identified as individuals with disabilities, seniors, youth, and low-income populations.

PSRC’s Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan is incorporated into T2040 and includes elements of the Opportunity Mapping project and related efforts into the Plan. These elements help identify where special needs populations are present, and give an insight into their transportation needs in the region.
PSRC’s Active Transportation Plan was adopted as part of Transportation 2040 in 2014. This plan emphasizes three key themes:

- **Safety**
- **Connectivity**
- **Design for All Ages and Abilities**

- Includes strategies for **accommodating seniors** and people with special needs
- Recognizes that increased opportunities to walk and bike helps to **address health disparities** for environmental justice populations
- Acknowledges that active transportation can help to provide **increased options for low-income** populations to safely and affordably get to where they need to go
Prioritization is a decision-making tool rather than a funding tool providing an evaluation framework for projects entering into the long-range plan. There are nine measures including Social Equity and Access to Opportunity.

During the T2040 update, this tool was used to help balance the financial strategy.

The tool for Social Equity and Access to Opportunity assessed:
- how projects improved environmental health and avoid creating new, mitigate existing, or eliminate previous negative impacts for special needs and environmental justice populations.
- how projects improved access to opportunity (utilizing the Opportunity Maps)

The tool for Jobs Access assessed:
- how projects access areas of high job concentration or support job retention or expansion
- how projects provided access to job-related training or educational opportunities
The Growing Transit Communities Strategy (GTC) is a three-part implementation plan to promote *thriving and equitable transit communities* in the central Puget Sound region and to provide tools and resources to implement adopted regional and local plans.

The **Regional Equity Network** was a cross-sector stakeholder group that provided an independent perspective and social equity lens to the recommendations developed in the GTC Strategy including fifty-four **Capacity-Building Grants** totaling $450,000 to 43 community-based organizations to support engagement, outreach, organizing, and research.

http://www.psrc.org/growth/tod/growing-transit-communities-strategy/
The Puget Sound Regional Equity Network developed the Social Equity Framework which provided a lens to all of the Growing Transit Communities program work and deliverables.

**SOCIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK**

- Ensures that current residents, businesses and other community members benefit as their communities change and grow, rather than being displaced to areas that offer fewer opportunities.

- Seeks to ensure that new growth and development creates housing choices affordable to socially and economically diverse populations, opportunities for community businesses and institutions to thrive, and employment opportunities that pay a living wage.

- Empowers communities and builds local capacity to actively participate in planning and policy making processes start for developing a common definition for regional planning.
Opportunity Mapping

The Growing Transit Communities Partnership, partnered with the Kirwan Institute to develop maps building off the Institute’s work on “Communities of Opportunity” across the country.

“Opportunity” is a situation or condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed or excel.

These thematic maps show level of access to opportunity by a series of 20 indicators that represent five major categories of opportunity:

- education
- economic health
- housing and neighborhood quality
- transportation/mobility
- health and environment

http://www.psrc.org/growth/tod/growing-transit-communities-strategy/equity/opportunity-mapping/
Equity is incorporated into PSRC’s federal funding competitions in several ways:

• The project evaluation criteria for PSRC’s regional federal funding competition addresses equity in the project criteria by assessing how specific elements of a project serve or benefit populations served including special needs and environmental justice populations.

• An Environmental Justice analysis is also conducted on the full list of projects in a given 4-year Transportation Improvement Program, including all projects with funding in the region during that timeframe.
The Planning for Whole Communities Toolkit was funded by a Community Transformation Grant through our partners with public health.

Web-based planning resource which includes **25 resource guides** which include helpful links, and best practices that **local jurisdictions can use to promote health, equity, and sustainability** in plans, programs, and policies.

**Tools relevant to the topic of equity include:**

- Affordable Housing
- Community Engagement
- Inclusive Contracting
- Opportunity Mapping
- Design for Aging in Place
- Special Needs Transportation
- Healthy Food Retail
- and many others...

http://www.psrc.org/growth/wctoolkit/
Peer Networking with MPO’s and T4

PSRC has had the benefit working with Transportation 4 America (T4) as they work with 5 regions (Detroit, San Diego, Nashville, Portland, OR and the Puget Sound) to elevate health and equity into the regional planning process

• Health and Equity in Regional Planning – 2014 Report
• Health + Transportation - November 2014 Event
• Integrated Transportation and Health Impact Modeling Tool (ITHIM) Training
• Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Peer Exchange – staff day with Dave Vautin
• Planning for a Healthier Future – peer exchange in Nashville
• Peer Networking Series – Health and Equity in Transportation Planning (discussed performance measures)
Coordination with Transit Agencies

PSRC has been working on a **coordinated effort with transit agencies** to share tools and work together to identify how our perspective agencies can address equity in our planning processes.

**Non-Motorized Transit Access Tool** – developed by Sound Transit and King County Metro. PSRC is considering helping to expand the data (and tools) outside of the current study area.

**Transit Service Planning tools** – King County Metro and PSRC have been coordinating and sharing information about tools so as to better coordinate with modeling and network sharing.
PSRC’S Draft Transportation 2040 Performance Measures also address equity.

Such as (but not limited to):

- **Human Health** – air quality, access to opportunities to walk or bike
- **Equity** - connecting low opportunity areas with high opportunity areas
- **Safety and Security** – reduction in fatalities and serious injuries
- **Accessibility** – how well can people access transit, jobs, bike facilities, etc.

**Transportation Leadership Academy** on performance measures:

The region has pulled together a team of staff from PSRC and Transportation Choices Coalition together with PSRC Board Members to participate in a leadership training about performance measures sponsored by Transportation 4 America.

The goal is to learn how performance measures can help us better evaluate how our policies and projects get us to our intended outcomes for people, prosperity and planet.
Questions?
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