# The State of Transportation and Health Equity
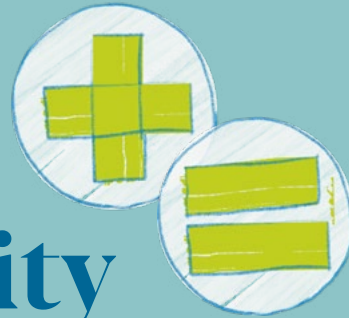
A field scan of the biggest challenges to health equity facing our transportation system and the strategies we should use to address them

**Smart Growth America**
Improving lives by improving communities

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## ABOUT SMART GROWTH AMERICA

Smart Growth America envisions a country where no matter where you live, or who you are, you can enjoy living in a place that is healthy, prosperous, and resilient. We empower communities through technical assistance, advocacy, and thought leadership to realize our vision of livable places, healthy people, and shared prosperity.

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Note: The organization listed under the interviewee's name represents the organization they were a part of at the time of the interview.
 * Indicates the interviewee no longer works at that organization.

# Contents

> I didn't know that people living near me in southeast Seattle had poorer health outcomes than people living in other parts of Seattle.

# Foreword

I grew up in southeast Seattle in the eighties, in what was and continues to be one of the most racially and ethnically-diverse parts of the city. My neighborhood shaped who I was growing up—where I played, where my parents could buy healthy food, and where I could get a summer job once I was old enough.

I knew growing up that my neighborhood didn't have the same infrastructure that other neighborhoods had; we didn't have sidewalks or streetlights, and my bus line was considered one of the most dangerous routes in the city. I also knew that it was harder for my family and neighbors to get around, that we would have to leave our community and drive to get fresh food or access good paying jobs.

What I didn't know until decades later was how all of this impacted my health and the health of my family and neighbors. I didn't know that people living near me in southeast Seattle had poorer health outcomes than people living in other parts of Seattle.[1]

I also didn't know that this wasn't just a problem in my neighborhood, but an issue in neighborhoods throughout the country, whether in a city, small town, or rural place. People's ability to live healthy lives to their full potential was determined by their address.

1   Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. King County Census Tracts.
    Retrieved from https://vizhub.healthdata.org/subnational/usa/wa/king-county.
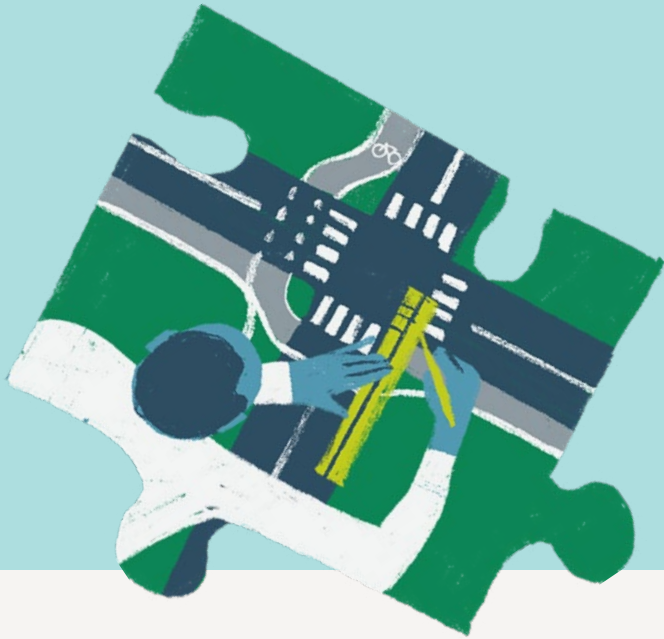
> There is a role for everyone in this report, whether you are an engineer, public health advocate, funder, or elected official.

Since my childhood, both the public and private sectors have made great strides to reduce geographic and racially-based health disparities. However, to date, these efforts are just beginning to make dents in addressing the issues, especially in mid-sized cities and rural areas. Public health advocates and professionals, alongside transportation advocates and professionals, have been leading this charge, but we still have a lot of work to do. The good news is that unlike so many public health crises that seem intractable, we have the tools to build healthy, thriving communities for all.

This report represents the best thinking from voices across the country. Thanks to interviews and guidances from practitioners, advocates, decision-makers, and community leaders working at the local, state, and federal level, this report spells out the biggest challenges to health equity facing our transportation system and the best tools to address the problem. This field scan shows that we have the solutions, but creating an equitable transportation system will require all stakeholders taking action.

There is a role for everyone in this report, whether you are an engineer, public health advocate, funder, or elected official. I encourage readers to explore the various strategies and incorporate them into their own work.

Sincerely,
Emiko Atherton

*Vice President, Thriving Communities, Smart Growth America*
*Director, National Complete Streets Coalition*

# Executive summary
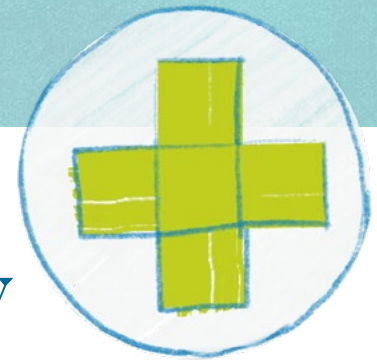
Our health is determined by a number of factors, including where we are born, grow, live, work, age, and how we get from one place to another.[2] Research continues to show that transportation in particular can both positively and negatively impact our health.[3,4] And yet time and again transportation decision-makers have set plans and policies in motion, and built projects that have furthered health inequities in the U.S.

In 2019 Smart Growth America conducted this field scan to identify the biggest challenges to health equity facing our transportation system, as well as the strategies we should use to address these challenges in communities of all sizes, with an eye towards strategies that could particularly be applied to small and mid-sized cities, and rural areas.

This field scan is part of a larger effort that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is supporting in order to understand the most promising opportunities to achieve equitable public infrastructure. In addition to Smart Growth America's research on surface transportation, other organizations worked on field scans of broadband, energy, and water.[5]

Smart Growth America's field scan consisted of four key components:

1. A literature review of current practices, planning efforts, and studies in the transportation field.

2. Qualitative data collection through 85 interviews with 92 experts working at the intersection of transportation and health equity.

3. Ground-truthing of qualitative findings through an in-person convening in St. Paul, MN.

4. Narrative development and message-testing with policy makers and voters.

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2   World Health Organization. (2019, June). Social Determinants of Health. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/.

3   Diez Roux AV. (2007). Integrating social and biologic factors in health research: A systems view. Ann. Epidemiol. 2007;17:569–574. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17553703.

4   American Public Health Association. (2010, February). The Hidden Health Costs of Transportation. Retrieved from https://www.apha.org/~/media/files/pdf/factsheets/hidden_health_costs_transportation.ashx.

5   This field scan focuses on surface transportation and does not address air travel.

The U.S. transportation system is complex and offers numerous opportunities to impact health equity.[6]

- **At the federal level**, stakeholders include Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). Congress sets policy and appropriates funding. USDOT carries out policy, decides rules, and allocates funding to projects.

- **At the state level**, state departments of transportation follow federal policy and set their own additional policy. They also spend and allocate federal money and may raise their own dollars.

- **At the regional level**, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) follow federal guidance and may set regional policy. MPOs also distribute federal funding to local agencies.

- **At the local level**, local transportation agencies follow federal, state, and regional policy, as well as set their own policy. They spend federal and state dollars, and may raise additional local dollars.

There are opportunities to influence transportation equity at all levels of government. However, the biggest opportunity is at the federal level, which dictates the national framework for policies and how dollars are allocated.*

Federal policy or lack thereof shapes our transportation system and filters down to the local level. In addition, historically we have relied on the federal gas tax to fund transportation at all levels of government, but since the gas tax has not been raised in over 20 years, those funds have been depleted. As a result that puts more of an onus on the local level, and furthers transportation inequities.

While private investment has provided funding to some infrastructure projects through public-private partnerships, these projects are few and far between. In addition, these projects, like the Atlanta BeltLine and the Miami Brightline, have less public oversight and have faced criticism for not including sufficient equity provisions.

This field scan identifies six critical areas to advance health equity through transportation. To create an equitable system, stakeholders across levels and disciplines will need to improve the system both from within and from outside.

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6   U.S. Department of Transportation. (2017). Every Place Counts Leadership Academy Transportation Toolkit. Retrieved from https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/ToolkitFinal2017.pdf.
*   For additional detail on how the transportation sector is organized, please refer to the Every Place Counts Leadership Academy Transportation toolkit.

- **Elected officials** and **transportation- and land use-agency leadership** need to invest in the infrastructure of the most historically underserved communities by directly engaging the people who remain systematically excluded from the transportation planning process.

- **Transportation professionals** need to continue to rethink what transportation safety means and who it serves.

- **Advocates** need to put pressure on policy makers to develop a more equitable transportation system.

- **Funders** need to step in to provide support to advocates and stakeholders who are willing to disrupt the current transportation status quo.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but the six areas listed below are meant to represent the most pressing systemic challenges facing the field. Within the report, these critical areas are presented alongside a number of specific sub-strategies that should be used to achieve a more equitable transportation system. These are strategies that can work in all types of communities in the United States, including small and mid-sized cities and rural areas.

**1. Reframe the transportation conversation.** The current messaging, narratives, and language around creating an equitable transportation system are not working. Those who care about health equity are failing to motivate our policy makers or help them understand the implications of their actions. Advocates and professionals need to reframe transportation and transportation solutions around values that people care about, such as having the freedom to choose how to travel.

**2. Allocate funding and resources equitably.** At all levels of government, transportation funding and resources support projects that prioritize high-speed car travel over getting people where they need to go in a safe, convenient, accessible, and affordable way. Improvements must be made at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure that funding and resources advance a multimodal system that puts people first.

**3. Improve the quality and diversity of transportation leadership.** Poor decision-making and weak leadership at all levels of government have created a built environment that is not easy or affordable to fix. Our decision-makers need to better represent our communities, especially the most disenfranchised populations, and must commit to advancing a people-centered transportation vision.

**4. Prioritize historically underrepresented communities in transportation decision-making.** Disenfranchised communities have held very little power in influencing the transportation decision-making process. Authentic, meaningful community engagement should be a collaborative, not extractive, process. It requires an intentional allocation of both time and resources and should focus on listening to the voices that have been excluded or isolated.

**5. Work in unison to provide people-focused infrastructure.** Historically, our government departments and agencies have operated in silos. At every level of government, transportation, health, housing, and planning agencies have occupied their own spheres of influence, with equity treated as an afterthought, if at all. Government agencies and departments must work in unison to provide people-centered infrastructure.

**6. Invest in communities without displacement.** The U.S. has a long history of displacing people of color in the name of "prosperity." The displacement happening today is no different. While transportation investments can improve health outcomes in communities, we need to ensure that those who live there (and suffer the most) can benefit from the improvements and aren't just displaced to another area with bad outcomes.

This report spells out the six biggest challenges to health equity facing our transportation system and the best tools to address the problem. The report shows that we have solutions available, but creating an equitable transportation system will require all stakeholders taking action.

> "Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible."
>
> *- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

# Introduction

Transportation, though rarely the top issue for policy makers, is often the deciding factor in whether or not people can reach essential goods and services like employment, health care, healthy food, places of worship, education, and family & friends.

Our health is determined by a number of factors, including where we are born, grow, live, work, age, and how we get from one place to another.[7] The relationship between the built environment and health is complex and affected by numerous characteristics, such as culture, safety, time management, travel-related and environmental attitudes, and perceptions of the built environment.[8] There is no shortage of research explaining the link between transportation and health, and how our policy decisions have shaped our built environment and our transportation choices.[9,10]

Policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels have adopted transportation policies and practices that fail to provide everyone with access to affordable, safe, convenient, and reliable transportation options. Over the last few decades, our communities have been planned to ensure cars can always drive fast, whether or not anyone can actually get where they want to go. The effects that has had on our health are measurable and immense: less opportunity for physical activity, an increased number of traffic crashes,

7   World Health Organization. (2019, June). Social Determinants of Health. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/.

8   Transportation Research Board. (2005). Does the built environment influence physical activity? Examining the evidence. Washington, DC, USA. Retrieved from https://www.nap.edu/read/11203/chapter/1#xv.

9   Sallis JF, Frank LD, Saelens BE, Kraft MK. (2004). Active transportation and physical activity: opportunities for collaboration on transportation and public health research. Transp Res Part A Policy Pract. 2004;38(4):249.

10  Handy S, Boarnet M, Ewing R, Killingsworth RE. (2002). How the built environment affects physical activity: views from urban planning. Am J Prev Med. 2002;23(2S):64–73.

increased exposure to air pollution, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and getting where we need to go has become difficult and more expensive.[11,12] Communities with limited access to transportation options carry an even larger share of the burden. Those communities tend to have poorer health outcomes, a higher risk of being struck and killed by drivers while biking, walking, or rolling, and limited access to healthcare, jobs, and other essential goods and services.[13]

The U.S. transportation system consists of federal, state, and local decision-makers and stakeholders who each play a role in guiding our plans, policies, funding, and projects that ultimately shape the transportation options in this country.[14] Federal and state transportation is funded with gas taxes, though the federal gas tax has declined in value and has proved insufficient.[15] State and local entities also use a variety of other fees and taxes to raise funds for transportation. At all levels of government this funding has been used to build, maintain, and operate a transportation system that has furthered health inequities.

These inequities were not created quickly or by accident, and they have been reinforced year after year through decisions about land use, housing, and transportation. For example, structural racism influenced decisions about the construction of the U.S. Interstate Highway System. Transportation planners and politicians gave preferential treatment to white neighborhoods and suburban commuters while dividing and destroying the fabric of African-American neighborhoods, resulting in displacement and impoverishment.[16] Government-sanctioned private policies like "redlining" or racially restrictive covenants further entrenched segregation in America.[17] Although the Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed these practices, the socioeconomic and health disparities that resulted endure today.[18]

Beginning in the 1950s, fueled by massive federal investment in the Interstate system, development sprawled outside of urban centers, concentrating wealth in white suburbs and leaving urban neighborhoods, often communities of color, to decay. However, over the last few decades, the urban cores of many large cities have experienced a rebirth, leading to rising property values and decreased affordability for those initially left behind, pushing

11  American Public Health Association. (2010, February). The Hidden Health Costs of Transportation. Retrieved from https://www.apha.org/~/media/files/pdf/factsheets/hidden_health_costs_transportation.ashx
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them out to the suburbs. Decreased affordability of urban cores is just one of several factors that fueled the rapid suburbanization of poverty leading to the spatial mismatch seen in suburbs today—those who can least afford a car are forced to live in places where getting around without one is far from easy, safe, and convenient because there are few, if any, other options.[19]

Over time, inequitable transportation investments have exacerbated health disparities by limiting access for certain communities. Transportation should not be an economic burden, but it is expensive to own and maintain a car in the U.S.—an annual cost of $8,849 according to AAA.[20] Because the cost of car ownership is so high, low-income households in auto-centric communities have higher transportation costs than low-income households in walkable, rollable communities. This leaves these low-income households in a precarious and vulnerable position, one car breakdown (or other emergency) away from poverty.[21] Without access to transportation options like public transit, walking and rolling, or biking, those who live in auto-centric communities are more likely to fall into poverty due to transportation-related emergencies. These challenges are further exacerbated for people living in rural communities, with no access to transit and long distances between destinations.

Additionally, evidence continues to show very limited public investments are made in low-income communities to improve roads, sidewalks, lighting, and other transportation infrastructure that would improve their everyday mobility, physical activity, and safety.[22] One direct outcome is that drivers strike and kill people walking in low-income neighborhoods at much higher rates than in high-income neighborhoods because those in low-income neighborhoods lack safe places to walk or roll.[23] Additionally, research on pedestrians using wheelchairs indicate people who use wheelchairs "experience substantial pedestrian mortality disparities."[24]

> One outcome is that drivers strike and kill people walking in low-income neighborhoods at much higher rates than in high-income neighborhoods.

19  Kneebone E, Garr E. (2010). The Suburbanization of Poverty: Trends in Metropolitan America, 2000 to 2008. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. Retrieved from https://media.timesfreepress.com/docs/2010/02/Brookings_report_on_poverty_0208.pdf.
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24  Kraemer, JD, Benton, CS. Disparities in road crash mortality among pedestrians using wheelchairs in the USA: results of a capture–recapture analysis. BMJ Open. 2015;5:e008396. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-008396

**Lower-income people and people of color are more likely to be carless**

"In 2015, only 6.51 percent of White households did not have access to a car, while 19.71 percent of Black households did not have access to a car."

*- National Equity Atlas*

**Health equity is both a process and an outcome.**

As a **process** it means passing policies, investing dollars, and supporting strategies that eliminate disparities in health by removing economic and social obstacles to health. The **ultimate goal** of health equity is the elimination of social disparities that cause health inequities, such as poverty and discrimination.

In recent years, transportation has received additional attention from the public, elected officials, and others due to the introduction of new technology, including but not limited to ridesharing and electric scooters. Emerging mobility and technology platforms, often referred to as new mobility, should be seen as potential tools to create an equitable transportation system, not as stand-alone solutions or strategies to address broader, systemic transportation challenges.

To increase health equity, Smart Growth America recommends an approach to transportation decision-making and investments that puts people—especially the most disenfranchised—first. This means considering all users when planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining transportation networks to ensure that regardless of who you are or how you need or want to travel, you can get where you need to go in a safe, reliable, affordable, convenient, and comfortable way.

To achieve this goal, stakeholders across levels and disciplines need to work to improve the system both from within and from outside.

**Elected officials** and **transportation- and land use-agency leadership** need to invest in the infrastructure of the most historically underserved communities by directly engaging the people who remain systematically excluded from the transportation planning process. **Transportation professionals** need to continue to rethink what transportation safety means and who it serves. **Advocates** need to put pressure on policy makers to develop a more equitable transportation system. **Funders** need to step in to provide support to advocates and stakeholders who are willing to disrupt the current transportation status quo.

Equitable transportation systems are fundamental for building healthy communities; however, transportation policies and regulations have historically not included guidelines or measures that prioritize and implement projects that improve equity. The shift in understanding of the importance of transportation and its impact on health is an opportunity to rethink the way we invest in our communities, the way we regulate private actors, and the way we design infrastructure in communities of all sizes. However, just as inequities were built through intentional actions steeped in structural racism over decades of decision-making, dismantling those inequities requires a continuous, intentional, and concerted effort from all sectors to build healthier, more equitable communities over time.

## ABOUT THIS FIELD SCAN

A field scan is a survey and analysis of key trends and practices within a certain field of practice. This field scan provides an overview of **six critical areas** that must be addressed to advance health equity through transportation decision-making, as well as the strategies needed to do so.

It's important to note that each challenge identified in this report is a symptom or result of structural racism in some way. While this report attempts to identify key opportunities to impact and break down that system, we also realize that transportation is one small piece of a larger racist system that must be eradicated to fully realize health equity. This report focuses on short-term (1-5 years) and medium-term (5-10 years) strategies to address some of the acute issues currently facing transportation in support of the longer-term goal of breaking down systemic racism.

### A note on audience

The primary audience for this field scan is transportation and health practitioners and advocates. The secondary audience is policy makers, elected officials, and funders interested in understanding the biggest challenges and most effective strategies to improve health equity through transportation investment.

### Navigating this report

Smart Growth America identified six critical areas that policy makers, transportation professionals, advocates, and funders must address to advance health equity through transportation. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is meant to represent the most pressing challenges facing the field. Across the six focus areas are 40 specific overlapping strategies meant to be undertaken together. These are strategies that can work in all types of communities in the United States, including mid-sized cities and rural areas. Similarly,

case studies within the report cover communities of all sizes and illustrate best practices that are applicable across the country.

1. Reframe the transportation conversation
2. Allocate funding and resources equitably
3. Improve the quality and diversity of transportation leadership
4. Prioritize historically underrepresented communities in transportation decision-making
5. Work in unison to provide people-focused infrastructure
6. Invest in communities without displacement

Each strategy includes icons, explained below, that indicate the typical scenario in which the strategy might be applied.

**LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT: Federal, State, Local**

What level of government does the strategy apply to?

**RESPONSIBILITY: Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioner, Elected Official, Advocate**

Who is responsible for carrying out the strategy?

**5 Ps: Policy, Process, Politics, People, Practice**

Is the strategy addressing policy, process, politics, people, or practice?
- Policy: codifying principles or actions within government
- Process: updating procedures
- Politics: influencing or guiding policy makers and their decisions
- People: changes to the way individuals carry out the action and/or changes to who carries out the action
- Practice: the technical application of policies and procedures

# GLOSSARY OF RELEVANT TERMS

**Complete Streets:** An approach that integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks to ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.

**Community:** A group of people who feel connected by place, culture, purpose, or shared experiences.

**Built environment:** The physical space designed and built by people, ranging in scale from cities to buildings, homes, streets, and other uses of space that have an impact on quality of life and public health.

**Disenfranchised communities:** Populations that have systematically been deprived of rights and privileges over time, impacting their access to jobs and essential services and their ability to accumulate wealth.

**Decision-makers**: People with formal oversight over transportation planning, funding, design, building, and maintenance.

**Demonstration projects**: Temporary improvements that test changes to the built environment. Also known as tactical urbanism or quick builds, they are effective, engaging tools for communities and transportation departments to test out new ideas, gather feedback, and show the flexibility of the built environment. They also provide elected officials a low-risk method to see how their community reacts before committing to a permanent solution or policy change.

**Fair Housing Act:** A federal act adopted in 1968 that prohibited discrimination related to the rental, sale, or fianancing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, or sex.

**Health equity**: A fair and just opportunity for everyone to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to quality education and housing, safe environments, good jobs with fair pay, and health care. To achieve health equity is to reduce and ultimately eliminate disparities in health and its determinants that adversely affect excluded or marginalized groups.[25]

**Low-income:** For the purposes of this report, low-income is defined as a person or family whose income is insufficient to meet basic needs, such as housing, transportation, food, utilities, medical expenses, health care, education, recreation, childcare, and other necessities.

**Low-Income Tax Credit:** "A tax incentive to construct or rehabilitate affordable rental housing for low-income households."[26]

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25  Braveman P, Arkin E, Orleans T, Proctor D, and Plough A. (2017). What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make? Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Retrieved from http://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/what-is-health-equity-and-what-difference-does-a-definition-make.

26  Tax Policy Center Urban Institute & Brookings Institute. Tax Policy Center Briefing Book: Key Elements of the U.S. Tax System. Retrieved from https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-low-income-housing-tax-credit-and-how-does-it-work.

**Multimodal transportation system:** A transportation network that accommodates multiple modes of travel including, but not limited to, walking, rolling, bicycling, using public transit, and driving.

**Opportunity Zones:** A federal community development tax incentive that aims to encourage long-term private capital investment in America's low-income urban and rural communities. Three scalable tax incentives allow investors to re-invest their unrealized capital gains into Opportunity Funds dedicated to distressed communities.[27]

**Policy maker:** A person, elected or appointed, in charge of creating, and at times implementing, policy.

**Project selection criteria:** The metrics by which a transportation project is measured, ranked, and selected for funding and implementation.

**Rolling**: Navigating a community by using wheels, like a wheelchair.

**Rural:** Areas that are not metropolitan or urban. Rural areas come in many different shapes and sizes. They tend to be sparsely populated and have low-housing density. In many places, rural communities center around small, but dense, commercial areas that provide essential services like health and education.

**Shared capacity building:** Going beyond educating one side or the other during standalone engagements by providing time and space for co-learning and co-creation through a long-term community engagement process.

**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."[28]

**Suburban:** Residential areas within commuting distance from metro or urban areas, traditionally using a car-centric design.

**Trusted messenger:** A person or entity who relays messages to advance objectives and is regarded as a credible source of information.

**Thriving**: When a person or community has conditions and elements that support a healthy, vibrant life and the pursuit of happiness.

**Urban:** Developed areas in cities and metropolitan areas that are characterized by dense population and development.

27  LOCUS. (2018). National Opportunity Zone Ranking Report. Retrieved from https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/locus-opportunity-zones-national-ranking-report/.

28  Aspen Institute. Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis. Retrieved from https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf.

# Reframe the transportation conversation

## A failure to communicate effectively

It's a herculean task to help decision-makers and the public understand the connections between transportation, health, and equity. However, there's an even far more fundamental reality—the public, elected leaders included, understands very little about transportation. It is one of the few issues that affects each of us every day, yet the public is largely unfamiliar with how transportation decisions are made or who makes those decisions. Beyond that, it's hard for anyone to have a deep understanding of how other people experience the transportation system, the many inequities baked into the system, or the significant impact transportation has on our health, safety, and economy.

Advocates invested in improving transportation and health equity often use overly complicated jargon, rely upon data at the expense of telling compelling stories, stick with messages that are ineffective but preferred by advocates, and fail to find and use frames and messages which are compelling to the leaders and decision-makers most crucial to changing things. Put more bluntly, advocates too often use messages that they care about, like touting complicated and confusing ideas like "leveraging cross-sector collaboration to improve health outcomes" instead of developing messages that the desired audience will care about. Current messaging, narratives, and language are not working. Those who are working towards health equity are failing to motivate our policy makers or help them understand the implications of their actions.

STRATEGY 1.1

## CONNECT TRANSPORTATION MESSAGES TO ISSUES PEOPLE CARE ABOUT

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Advocate, Transportation Practitioner, Transportation Leadership | Politics |

**Challenge:** Transportation is rarely a top priority for policy makers, although it impacts their top priorities like jobs, healthcare, and the economy.

**Strategy:** Advocates and professionals must define transportation in terms that align with the higher priorities of policy makers and the public. To do this, there needs to be a national shift in the conversation about transportation with the goal of changing the way people understand and talk about it. Advocates and professionals need to frame transportation and transportation solutions around values that people care about, such as having the freedom to choose how to travel. Through research and voter testing, communication experts found that messages should:

- Connect with people's everyday lived experiences and frustrations with transportation.
- Show how a smarter transportation system will improve the quality of life for individuals and drive economic growth for cities.
- Address the unique transportation challenges of both urban and rural parts of the country.

**FEATURE**

## Building support for transit investment

(Indianapolis, IN)

In 2016, a diverse coalition of transit advocates in Indianapolis, IN, including the chamber of commerce, the faith-based community, and others, worked together on a successful campaign to pass a referendum to increase transit funding and expand service. Their multi-pronged approach tailored messages to resonate with different audiences. For example the coalition built business support by conducting and sharing research supporting the economic benefits of improving public transportation.

**Learn more** about Indianapolis's story and others in Transportation for America's guide for transit advocates, *Fight For Your Ride: An advocate's guide for improving & expanding transit*, at http://t4america.org/maps-tools/.

*Transit riders boarding and exiting the first bus rapid transit line in Indianapolis, IN in September, 2019. Photo courtesy of IndyGo Bus.*

STRATEGY 1.2

# EDUCATE THE PRESS



| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Advocate, Electeds | Practice |



*Recent story from Atlanta, GA. News coverage never mentions a driver and uses the passive voice, implicitly placing blame on the victim instead of the driver of the vehicle.*

**Challenge:** U.S. media outlets lack a sophisticated understanding of transportation and the impact it has on health, equity, safety, and our economy, or how the existing transportation program undermines these priorities. This is reflected in the type of press that transportation receives, which tends to focus on reporting traffic, construction, and crashes, (often solely from the drivers' perspective) and rarely on government's role in perpetuating dangerous street design, through engineering practices that prioritize moving cars fast over people's lives. The media also tends to term preventable pedestrian fatalities as "accidents" instead of crashes, which implies that they are inevitable, undermining the urgency of the pedestrian fatality crisis in the U.S., while in the last decade drivers struck and killed almost 50,000 pedestrians. A disproportionate number of those deaths were people of color, people walking in low-income communities, and older adults.[29]

**Strategy:** Advocates need to educate the media on the impact transportation has on our communities and why our transportation system doesn't serve everyone. Most importantly, advocates must hold the media accountable to avoid victim-blaming rhetoric.

29  Smart Growth America. (2019, January). Dangerous by Design 2019. Retrieved from https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/.

## FEATURE

### #CrashNotAccident

In 2015 two transportation advocacy organizations, Transportation Alternatives and Families for Safe Streets, launched a campaign to change the way individuals, agencies, and media outlets communicate about traffic safety, urging them to use the term "crash" over "accident." This effort resulted in the Associated Press issuing guidance to reporters to avoid using the term "accident" in this context because it "can be read as exonerating the person responsible."[30]

**Learn more** and sign on to the pledge at https://www.crashnotaccident.com/.

STRATEGY 1.3

## USE TRUSTED MESSENGERS



| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioner, Advocate | Process |

**Challenge:** Transportation policy and decision-making can lack the appropriate communicators to motivate change. People are more receptive to and trusting of people they perceive as peers with a shared experience. For example, an engineer is more likely to listen to a fellow engineer, a neighbor is more trusting of a fellow neighbor, and an elected official is more comfortable taking a risk when they have heard first hand from an elected official in a similar position.

**Strategy:** To effectively communicate ideas and messages that build support for more equitable transportation, use trusted messengers, or individuals who are similar to the intended audience.

30  Vision Zero Network. Commit to #CrashNotAccident. Retrieved from https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/pledge/.

*Ambassadors from Bike Easy's Complete Streets Ambassador program. Photo courtesy of Bike Easy.*

**FEATURE**

## Bike Easy's Complete Streets Ambassador Program

(New Orleans, LA)

Bike Easy, a bicycle advocacy organization in New Orleans, LA, uses an ambassador model to better connect with residents about transportation improvements. Through this program, Bike Easy has trained a select number of community members, provided them with resources, and ultimately been able to better promote safe walking, biking, transit, and livable, accessible streets to New Orleans residents.

**Learn more** about Bike Easy's Ambassador Program at http://bikeeasy.org/advocacy/The-Complete-Streets-Ambassador-Program.

STRATEGY 1.4

## USE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioner, Elected Official | Process, Practice |

**Challenge:** Most people, including elected officials, don't think about their built environment as easily changeable, partly due to the fact that transportation projects often are not fully realized for years, even decades. And rarely do they understand the impact of the built environment on their behavior or health.

**Strategy:** Demonstration projects, also known as tactical urbanism or quick builds, are temporary improvements that test changes to the built environment. They are effective, engaging tools for

communities and transportation departments to test out new ideas, gather feedback, and show the flexibility of the built environment. They also provide elected officials a low-risk method to see how their community reacts before committing to a permanent solution or policy change. Demonstration projects also serve as inspiration for other communities, and the best practices that emerge from demonstration projects can be scaled and shared with a larger audience. As their name implies, these projects demonstrate how to approach transportation safely and equitably in communities of all sizes and geographical regions of the country to make the case that good transportation supports important outcomes everywhere.



*A sign from the South Bend demonstration project educating users about traffic circles. Photo courtesy of the City of South Bend.*

**FEATURE**

## Neighborhood traffic calming demonstration project
(South Bend, IN)

As part of Smart Growth America's Safe Streets Academy, South Bend, IN used demonstration projects to evaluate the effectiveness of neighborhood traffic calming techniques, including traffic circles, chicanes, and bump outs. For each project, the city used educational signs to communicate to residents how street design can improve the safety of streets. As a result of the demonstration projects, the city of South Bend built trust with the community and drivers drove slower through the redesigned streets.

**Learn more** about the Safe Streets Academy and the South Bend, IN project in the summary report which can be found at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/safety-demonstration-projects-case-studies-from-orlando-fl-lexington-ky-and-south-bend-in/.

STRATEGY 1.5

# TELL STORIES TO CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT          RESPONSIBILITY          5 PS

All                          Advocate                Politics

**Challenge**: Policy makers, especially elected officials, usually make decisions based on politics and personal beliefs, not necessarily based on data.

**Strategy:** Advocates need to use stories to change the hearts and minds of our leaders. Leading with statistics is not convincing. Instead advocates need to lead with messages that matter to electeds and their constituents, like economic development or access to jobs. Even more importantly, advocates need to tell stories—using a variety of media formats including photos, videos, gifs, and more—that inspire policy makers, generate empathy, and feel relatable. We need to create an environment where leaders make decisions based on compassion.
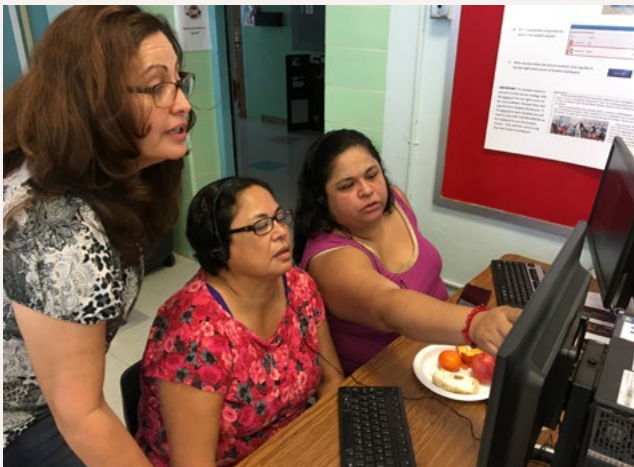


*Tucson residents participate in digital storytelling training. Photos courtesy of Living Streets Alliance.*

**FEATURE**

## Using digital storytelling to highlight community voices
(Tucson, AZ)

In Tucson, AZ, local advocacy group, Living Streets Alliance (LSA) offered digital storytelling training opportunity for Tucsonans to develop their own videos about how they get around their community. Through the trainings, LSA collected a number of real-life experiences and demonstrated the importance of improving walking and rolling, biking, and transit infrastructure in Tucson. LSA also worked to make this opportunity accessible by providing stipends, food, transit passes, and Spanish translation.

**Learn more** about Living Streets Alliance and their Complete Streets advocacy and storytelling at https://vimeo.com/user72508017.

## Telling the Alexandria Complete Street Story
(Alexandria, MN)

In Alexandria, MN, with support from Blue Cross Blue Shield MN, numerous stakeholders including engineers, business, and public health leaders came together to reimagine one of their community's main thoroughfares. The end project went beyond providing the critical water and sewer infrastructure updates; it includes bump-outs at crosswalks, trees, benches, planters, and widened sidewalks. Not only was the project well received by the community, it also increased access to a nearby bike trail, and saw an economic benefit for local businesses. The story of Alexandria and its local businesses was captured by Blue Cross Blue Shield and continues to be shared as a successful Completes Streets project with communities around the county.

**Learn more** about Complete Streets in Alexandria, MN at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZkEZ3kJfFM.

STRATEGY 1.6

# CREATE AND SHARE CASE STUDIES AND EASY TO UNDERSTAND FACT SHEETS

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Advocate, Transportation Practitioner | Process |

**Challenge:** Too few case studies focus on the impact of transportation on health in rural and suburban environments, address anti-displacement strategies outside of urban places, or examine the relationship between transportation and employment. There is also a lack of simple, easy to understand fact sheets to explain complicated policy ideas.

**Strategy**: Advocates and transportation professionals must create and share case studies and easy to understand fact sheets that anyone, regardless of their experience with the topic, can understand. These resources are essential for advocates and transportation professionals because they illustrate what did or did not work, build on what has worked, and gather useful lessons to support their own programs, policies, and projects.

*Bike rack full of bicycles available for check out as part of Thrive Allen County's bike share. Photo courtesy of Thrive Allen County.*

## Small-scale bike shares inspire other communities to create their own

(Allen County, Kansas)

Allen County wasn't the first community in Kansas to provide a small-scale bike share and they probably aren't the last. Inspired by other small-scale bikeshares in Kansas, Allen County was interested in addressing their community's barrier to biking—a lack of access—and put together a system that was tailored to the needs of their rural area. Their system functions more like a "bike library" where users can check out bicycles for free. Over 40 bikes, including two tricycles, are currently available for use in seven locations around the county and can be checked out for either minutes or months. Since its launch in 2016, this program has been well-received and continues to grow in size.

**Learn more** about Thrive Allen County's bike share at http://thriveallencounty.org/news/thrive-innovative-rural-bike-share/.

FEATURE

## Dangerous by Design state reports

Every two years, the National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC) releases *Dangerous by Design*, a report that calls attention to pedestrian fatalities and solutions. In 2019, with support from AARP, NCSC released individual state reports that provide a more detailed look at pedestrian deaths. The disaggregated data allows advocates to make stronger cases at the state and regional level.

**Learn more** about *Dangerous by Design* at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/.

# Allocate funding & resources equitably

## Government misallocation and mismanagement of funds and resources

At all levels of government, transportation funding and resources continue to support projects that prioritize car travel over getting people where they need to go in a safe, convenient, accessible, and affordable way. Improvements must be made at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure that funding and resources advance a multimodal system that puts people first.

STRATEGY 2.1

### FIX FEDERAL POLICY BY CREATING A NATIONAL VISION FOR TRANSPORTATION

**Challenge:** The misallocation of transportation dollars starts at the national level. Our federal transportation policy lacks vision and fails to account for how people need or choose to travel. Each year billions of dollars are spent without clear outcomes or sufficient accountability. Our federal transportation program has not been overhauled in 70 years, and as a result, state departments of transportation continue to do what they were originally chartered to do: build

Average annual
FAST Act funding
(billions)

**HIGHWAYS**

**TRANSIT**

50

40

30

20

10

0
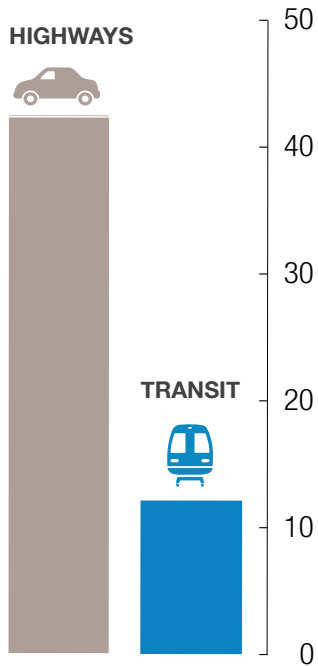
roads to move cars fast in all contexts like it's still 1950. Further, federal government actions set the framework for state and local governments to follow, meaning as long as the federal government prioritizes the building of roads at the expense of moving people, so will state and local governments.

> We need our investments to be tied to outcomes, and for these outcomes to be tied to equity goals.
>
> *Anna Ricklin*
> *Health in All Policies, Fairfax County*

< *Within the $42.5 billion for highways, there are four programs that can be used for multimodal improvements: Transportation Alternatives Program at $.84 billion, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program at $2.4 billion, Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) at $2.6 billion, and Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) at $11.9 billion. See a more detailed funding breakdown from Transportation for America at http://t4america.org/maps-tools/fast-act/.*

SUB-STRATEGY 2.1.1

## Connect people to destinations

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

RESPONSIBILITY

5 PS

Federal

Elected Official,
Transportation Leadership,
Advocate

Policy

Transportation agencies typically measure how well their systems perform with an incredibly simplistic measure of vehicle delay on certain segments of their roadway network, regardless of how many passengers those vehicles are carrying, how many people are traveling outside of vehicles, or whether or not anyone actually reaches their destination. As a result, agencies build roads that exclusively prioritize moving vehicles at high speeds and high volumes. Instead, agencies should measure the effectiveness of their transportation system and investments by how well they connect people to jobs and other essential services via public transit, passenger rail, walking and rolling, bicycling, and driving.

*A completed Smart Scale project in Harrisburg, VA. Photo courtesy of Virginia's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment.*

**FEATURE**

Smart Scale: Performance-based project scoring framework

In 2014, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) updated how it selects transportation projects for funding with the creation of Smart Scale. Smart Scale, a performance-based framework, uses six factors—congestion mitigation, economic development, accessibility, safety, environmental quality, and (in areas with a population over 200,000) coordination with land use—to select projects for investment. This data-driven approach has helped VDOT select the transportation projects that best address their goals and values. As a result of this approach, VDOT is funding more Complete Streets projects because the Smart Scale framework ranks those projects as high value compared to their costs.

**Learn more** about Smart Scale at http://vasmartscale.org/.

When we start to think about transportation in terms of accessibility, we start to humanize the transportation sector. If we can humanize our decision, it can shift into making better projects and better improvements, rather than trying to reduce congestion by three minutes.

*James Turnwald*
*Executive Director, Michiana Area Council of Governments*

SUB-STRATEGY 2.1.2

# Set performance targets that will improve safety

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| Federal | Elected Official, Advocate | Policy, Process |

Transportation agencies, including state and local DOTs and metropolitan planning organizations, are not held responsible for any increases to the number of fatalities caused by their roadways. They receive the same amount of funding regardless of whether they are killing more people each year or making their roads safer. Agencies must be held accountable for making reductions in serious injuries and fatalities and should be penalized for failing to meet those targets. Federal law should require transportation agencies to redirect a portion of their highway federal funding to safety improvements, including for non-motorized users, if they see an increase in non-motorized fatalities in their states or if they adopt plans (such as state DOT state highway safety plans) which assume an increase in non-motorized fatalities, as many states do. Further, federal law should specifically direct state DOTs to use funding on infrastructure safety improvements for systemic change, not programs that focus on individual behavior, such as enforcement programs, which end up punishing and harming communities, particularly communities of color.[31]

## FEATURE

### No incentive to improve safety

The Federal Highway Administration's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) requires state DOTs to set performance targets for traffic fatalities and serious injuries and track their progress over time. However, there are no consequences to setting higher target numbers for deaths and serious injuries. As a result, in 2017, 18 states set targets for non-motorized deaths and injuries in 2018 that were higher than the most recent year of data reported.

**Learn more** from the *Dangerous by Design* report at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/.

31 Stanford Open Policing Project 2019. Findings. Retrieved from https://openpolicing.stanford.edu/findings/.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.1.3

# Pass a binding, federal Complete Streets policy

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

RESPONSIBILITY

5 PS

Federal

Elected Official, Advocate

Policy

The value of safety for all people who use our streets must be reflected in the decisions made about how to fund, design, operate, maintain, and measure the success of our roads. Unfortunately, most agencies prioritize speed over safety. Additionally, many localities that want to make their most dangerous roads safer can't do so because those roads are controlled and operated by the state. A federal Complete Streets policy would require state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations to consider all users of the transportation system when using federal funding and allow local agencies and residents to push for transportation systems that better suit their needs.



*People walking across a crosswalk in Cleveland Heights, OH. Photo courtesy of the City of Cleveland Heights.*

**FEATURE**

## Complete Streets Act of 2019

The Complete Streets Act of 2019, is a product of over a decade of federal advocacy by the National Complete Streets Coalition and Smart Growth America. Introduced by legislators in 2019, the bill would require states and metro areas to design and build safer streets for everyone. Specifically, if passed, it would require states to set aside federal highway funds for Complete Streets projects, create a statewide program to award the money (and provide technical support), and adopt design standards that support safer, Complete Streets. This legislation would reallocate existing federal funding to communities of all sizes, regardless of their tax base, to build Complete Streets projects.

**Learn more** about the Complete Streets Act of 2019 at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/complete-streets-act-of-2019/.

STRATEGY 2.2

# FIX STATE AND LOCAL POLICY

**Challenge:** State and local transportation policy is broken; the responsibilities and priorities of state departments of transportation (DOTs) are no longer aligned. DOTs were created to implement a highway building program to move cars as fast as possible across mainly rural areas. They excelled at doing that. And created a long list of transportation problems in the process.

Today, the responsibilities and stated goals of DOTs and metropolitan planning agencies (MPOs) have expanded to moving people and goods safely and efficiently around metro areas by multiple modes—walk, roll, bike, bus, train, and car. However, the top priority for most transportation agencies—whether explicit or implicit— is still building roads to move cars as fast as possible. Staffing, expertise, data, and tools are all focused on this goal. Since state DOTs direct most of the transportation funding in the U.S. and MPOs guide the overall transportation planning process in metro areas, there is an opportunity to improve outcomes by affecting both policy and culture at the state and local level.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.2.1

## Change agency culture to support multimodal transportation systems

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State | Transportation Leadership | People, Process |

There is a long way to go before transportation agencies will have an internal culture that supports a multimodal transportation system. However, short term steps can begin to turn the tide, such as revising principles, missions, and visions to prioritize a multimodal transportation system; updating procedures, standards, and staff performance evaluations to reflect those principles; and providing training to help staff thrive under the new priorities.

### FEATURE

Making change within the Florida Department of Transportation

Florida consistently ranks as the most dangerous state for walking in the U.S. Between 2008 and 2017, 5,433 people walking were struck and killed by drivers making it the most dangerous state for people walking in 2018. In an effort to make its streets safer, the Florida Department of Transportation engaged Smart Growth America to develop an implementation plan to integrate Complete Streets into the department's practices, decisions, and investments.

The five-part framework included:

1. Revising guidance, standards, manuals, policies, and other documents.
2. Updating decision-making processes.
3. Modifying approaches for measuring performance.
4. Managing internal and external communications and collaboration during implementation.
5. Providing ongoing education and training.

**Learn more** about Florida's efforts to change internal culture and structure at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/fdots-new-complete-streets-implementation-plan-will-take-policy-into-practice/.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.2.2

## Create budget transparency

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Advocate | Process |

There is a lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to how transportation money is spent and why. Agencies should be more transparent with their spending breakdowns and use tools like participatory budgeting to let the community, especially voices that have historically not been heard, decide how transportation funding should be spent.

**FEATURE**

Using deliberative democracy to set capital budget priorities
(Pittsburgh, PA)

The City of Pittsburgh, PA uses collective decision-making forums as a method of gathering diverse public input. Since 2015, the city has used deliberative democracy to assist in setting the capital budget priorities. Each year these forums occur after the mayor sets budget priorities, but before the mayor receives funding proposals from council members and city departments. This early engage-ment is key to ensuring community feedback can actually guide the development of the budget.

**Learn more** about Pittsburgh's deliberative democracy efforts at http://hss.cmu.edu/pdd/cities/handbook.pdf.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.2.3

## Adopt and implement policies that prioritize the needs of disenfranchised populations

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

RESPONSIBILITY

5 PS

State, Local

Transportation Leadership, Advocate

Process

Adopting and implementing binding Complete Streets policies and Vision Zero plans is a crucial opportunity to prioritize the needs of the most disenfranchised at the local and state level, especially where all departments are required to comply with these policies.



*Pedestrians walking in Cleveland Heights, OH. Photo courtesy of the City of Cleveland Heights.*

**FEATURE**

## Passing equitable, binding Complete Streets policies
(Cleveland Heights, OH)

In 2018, Cleveland Heights, OH passed the strongest Complete Streets policy that the National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC) has evaluated to date. Cleveland Heights worked with staff at the NCSC to update their Complete Streets policy framework to pass a policy that emphasized equity and used binding language to ensure policy implementation will occur. This work showed that small-sized communities can lead in creating Complete Streets policies.

**Learn more** about the Complete Streets policy framework at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/elements-complete-streets-policy/ and learn more about Cleaveland Heights and other strong policies highlighted in the Best Complete Streets Policies of 2018 report at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/the-best-complete-streets-policies-of-2018/.

STRATEGY 2.3

# BUILD BETTER PROJECTS

**Challenge**: At the state and local level, elected officials and transportation agencies use outdated tools and policies to make decisions about what transportation projects to fund. We need to change the way we select projects for funding, evaluate our projects, and set up agency or department budgets to reflect values centered around people.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.3.1

## Change the way we measure project performance

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioners | Process |

Transportation project performance measures need to reflect what people care about, whether that be improving health, safety, environment, or access. How many vehicles can move through a corridor and how fast they do so are deeply inadequate metrics.

### FEATURE

Using performance-based planning and project evaluation to enable more small-scale multimodal projects
(Chattanooga, TN)

The MPO for the Chattanooga, TN region, which represents Hamilton County in TN, the northern portions of Dade, Walker, and Catoosa Counties in Georgia, and many smaller, rural communities, developed new performance measures and a process for selecting transportation projects to fund. Their new process allowed more small-scale projects, which are more likely to encourage bicycling and walking, to compete with larger projects, which tend to be conventional roadway capacity projects. The updated process and corresponding framework helps elected officials better understand the benefits of multimodal projects and prioritize them for funding.

**Learn more** from the detailed case study featured in Transportation for America's guidebook, *Building Healthy and Prosperous Communities* at http://t4america.org/maps-tools/healthy-mpos-guidebook/.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.3.2

## Prioritize and select projects that serve all users

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioners | Policy, Process |

The process to select transportation projects for funding should account for a project's capacity to improve health and accessibility. In addition, funding should be awarded to projects that improve access for all modes, especially in underinvested communities.

### FEATURE

Equitable repaving process
(Oakland, CA)

Based on findings demonstrating disparity in services, resources, outcomes, and opportunities among underserved Oaklanders, the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) has taken several steps to institutionalize equity within their department. For example, in Spring 2019, OakDOT finalized a repaving plan that for the first time didn't inherently rely on "someone attending a meeting, calling their councilmember, or writing a petition." Instead the process prioritized local road projects based on three main factors: equity, street condition, and proximity to schools.

**Learn more** about OakDOT's efforts to prioritize equity at https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/draft-final-3-year-paving-plan.

> We need to frame analysis, research, and tools in ways that transportation professionals will understand and use. Until health considerations are integrated into the transportation decision-making and prioritization process, folks are likely to keep doing what they are used to doing.
>
> *Jeff Lindley, Associate Executive Director and Chief Technical Officer*
> *Institute of Transportation Engineers*

## HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AND RETURN-ON-INVESTMENT STUDIES

Health impact assessments (HIAs) and return-on-investment studies (ROIs) are two tools that transportation professionals can use to better understand the health effects of a proposed plan, policy, or project.

**What are health impact assessments (HIAs)?**
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HIAs are a "process that helps evaluate the potential health effects of a plan, project, or policy before it is built or implemented."[32] Municipalities and transportation agencies can conduct HIAs to better understand the holistic impact of a transportation investment on public health. **Learn more** about HIAs from the Health Impact Project at https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/health-impact-project.

**What are return-on-investment (ROI) studies?** ROI studies can help transportation stakeholders—like transportation agencies, elected officials, and advocates—better understand the benefits of a certain transportation investment by attaching monetary values to those benefits. The number and type of benefits analyzed can vary by agency, but broadly should address the following:

- Economy
- Equity
- Health
- Safety
- Environment
- Livability

32  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Health Impact Assessment. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.3.3

## Take time to make sure project scopes are correct

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

RESPONSIBILITY

5 PS

State, Local

Transportation leadership, Transportation practitioners

Practice, Process

In the transportation project development process, engineers are required to define the purpose and need of the project in the beginning of the process. However, more often than not, project scopes prematurely focus on the specific improvements, like adding a turn lane, when they should be defining the issue the project is attempting to solve, like reducing congestion. Said otherwise, engineers come with a solution before identifying the underlying problem they

are trying to solve. When agencies do this, they end up making investments by default without evaluating whether there are better options to address the identified issue—and often make environments more dangerous for people walking, rolling, and biking in the process by increasing vehicle speeds. Instead, transportation leadership should support and encourage transportation practitioners to take the time and resources to appropriately define the project scope and think more holistically about solutions to the need. If done correctly, this can lead to reduced project delays and costs in the long run, as well as higher-quality projects.

**FEATURE**

Revaluating project scopes, saving money

Due to a limited amount of funding and time, DOTs often have a backlog of projects that need to be completed. Tennessee DOT's (TDOT) backlog amounted to more than 800 roadway projects in various phases of development and would have cost an estimated $6.1 billion as the projects were initially scoped. To address the backlog, TDOT created the Expedited Project Delivery (EPD) process. Through this process TDOT staff reevaluated the project scopes, specified the intended outcomes, and looked for lower cost alternatives to achieve the outcome. In one case, instead of adding two more lanes to an existing two-lane road, TDOT added curve warnings, school speed limit signs, stop signs, and other pavements and signage improvements, saving over $57 million.

**Learn more** about the importance of project scopes in Smart Growth America's *Building a Better DOT* report at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/building-a-better-state-dot.

SUB-STRATEGY 2.3.4

## Integrate health into existing manuals and resources

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Practitioner, Advocate | Process |

Many transportation departments continue to use design guidance and manuals that are focused on improving the movement of vehicles, not people. Transportation departments need to encourage their employees to use manuals, design guidelines, and tools that include designing for non-motorized users, better explain the impact transportation has on health, and provide solutions for designing and building transportation networks that improve equity.

# Improve the quality and diversity of transportation leadership

## Poor decision-making and weak leadership

Agencies, engineers, planners, and elected officials continue to make transportation and land-use decisions that do not reflect their communities' needs. For example, decisions that have prioritized the high-speed movement of vehicles over the safety and mobility of people have led to almost 50,000 pedestrian deaths in the U.S. between 2008 and 2017, which is the equivalent of a jumbo jet full of people crashing—with no survivors—every single month.[33]

These decisions that shape our built environment are not easy or affordable to fix, and the responsibility does not lie just at the top. Every practitioner who works on our transportation system is positively or negatively shaping the health of our communities.

Additionally, in the business world, research shows that organizations with higher racial/ethnic or gender diversity in leadership outperform their peers in profitability and value creation.[34] Unfortunately, many transportation agencies still do not hire decision-makers that are fully representative of the communities they serve. This is among the reasons why our

33  Smart Growth America. (2019, January). Dangerous by Design 2019. Retrieved from https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/.
34  Hunt, V., Prince, S., Dixon-Fyle, S., and Yee, L. (2018, January). Delivering through Diversity. McKninsey & Company. Retreived from https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity

transportation policies and practices have systematically excluded certain communities from participating in the process and from receiving needed transportation investments. However, if decision-makers who understand the community commit to advancing a people-centered transportation vision, then we are one step closer to achieving an equitable transportation system that: 1) reflects communities' changing needs and 2) allows everyone, especially disenfranchised populations, to get where they need to go in an affordable, safe, and efficient way.

> We need our agencies and organizations to be led by people who are a true reflection of the communities that have been hurt the most from inequitable transportation policies.
>
> *Nathaniel Smith*
> *Founder and Chief Equity Officer, Partnership for Southern Equity*

STRATEGY 3.1

## SUPPORT AND INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership | People |

**Challenge:** Transportation departments will not make systemic changes in how they make decisions unless they change who is making those decisions from within.

**Strategy**: Transportation departments need to invest in long-term change by cultivating a pipeline for college and high school students to be future transportation leaders, and specifically incentivizing those who aren't currently represented in transportation leadership to attain those positions. Diverse teams bring diverse perspectives, and hiring in the transportation sector must improve representation by race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, immigration, and household income.

*Paid summer internships for high school students created an opportunity to improve a dangerous road in Houston's Gulfton neighborhood. Photos courtesy of Connect Community.*

**FEATURE**

## Hire high school interns as part of transportation projects (Houston, TX)

In 2019, Together for Safer Roads (TSR), a global NGO that builds public-private partnerships to improve road safety, worked with their member businesses, the City of Houston, and community groups to increase safety along a dangerous road in the Gulfton neighborhood. TSR intentionally kept the project scope focused on one corridor to ensure visible change would happen within the year. They invested over $100,000 in staff time, technical consulting, and grant funding, which was matched many times over by the Houston Department of Public Works. The shared goals were to transform an eight-lane road into a street safe for everyone, especially vulnerable road users, and to use the project to catalyze change across the city. As part of the project, TSR's partner Connect Community, a local non-profit, worked with an engineering consultant and hired local high school students for a STEM-based summer internship. The engineering firm filled an important gap for the city by facilitating a community engagement process to inform the redesign. The students developed traffic safety solutions, worked closely with the Department of Public Works, and pitched their ideas to the city council. Through this internship, students gained relevant transportation experience, built connections, and learned how they can make tangible improvements in their community. Together for Safer Roads continues to seek partners interested in nurturing the next generation of transportation professionals.

**Learn more** about Together for Safer Roads at https://www.togetherforsaferroads.org/.

> We need to focus on educating our youth so that they can reach their full potential and become the leaders that we all need and want to see.
>
> *Charles Brown*
> *Senior Researcher and Adjunct Professor, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center*

STRATEGY 3.2

# HIRE MORE DIVERSE DECISION-MAKERS

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership | People |

**Challenge:** Transportation agencies lack racial and gender diversity within their staff and leadership. Research from the National Academies of Science shows that "on average, White men are overutilized in all occupational categories [at state departments of transportation] except protective services and administrative support."[35]

**Strategy:** Transportation agencies must improve representation in their workforce by race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, immigration, and household income. This is particularly important for leadership and management positions as they hold more decision-making power. Staff and leadership should be representative of not just current community demographics, but take into account the changing nature of their communities' population.

**Learn more** from organizations like the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials who advocate at the national level for employment diversity, inclusion, and contracting opportunities in the transportation industry, and the National Society of Black Engineers who work to "increase the number of culturally responsible Black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community."

> We need to build equity fluency and commitments across sectors. Strong subject matter expertise is essential but insufficient… we need cultural, political, and movement-building capacity to make transportation about equitable and healthy communities.
>
> *Vayong Moua*
> *Director of Health Equity Advocacy, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota*

35  National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2007). Racial and Gender Diversity in State DOTs and Transit Agencies. The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/22010.

STRATEGY 3.3

## REDEFINE EXPERTISE WITHIN TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENTS

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT          RESPONSIBILITY                5 PS

All                 Transportation Leadership          People

**Challenge:** Transportation departments continue to hire and promote professionals with similar educational and professional backgrounds and experiences.

**Strategy**: Redefining expertise means valuing leaders who may not be transportation professionals by trade but are able to provide new perspectives and considerations. This could mean changing job postings to be less narrowly defined, hiring those who can bring a broader range of experiences and better reflect the communities being served, or recruiting from non-traditional sources for new employees.



*WSDOT's artists-in-residence. Photo courtesy of Mary Welcome and Kelly Gregory.*

**FEATURE**

Integrating creativity within state departments of transportation

In 2019, the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), with assistance from ArtPlace America and Transportation for America, launched the first ever artist-in-residence in a statewide agency in the U.S. Through their artist-in-residence program, Washington is hosting two artists who will work to find creative ways to advance WSDOT's strategic plan goals of inclusion, practical solutions and workforce development**.**

**Learn more** about WSDOT's artist-in-residence program at http://t4america. org/2019/03/21/get-to-know-washington-states-new-artists-in-residence/.

Strategy 3

STRATEGY 3.4

## PROVIDE AND REQUIRE TRAINING FOR TRANSPORTATION PROFESSIONALS AND DECISION-MAKERS

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT          RESPONSIBILITY          5 PS

All          Transportation Leadership          People, Policy

**Challenge:** Most transportation professionals and decision-makers may not be equipped to create equitable transportation solutions since they receive very little training or education on planning and designing a multimodal transportation system.

**Strategy**: Internal government operating policies should require their employees to attend trainings to better understand current transportation and cross-sector issues. Training shouldn't be a "checkbox," nor should it reinforce the way things have always been done. Rather trainings should help current and future decision-makers and leaders reframe the way they think about transportation challenges and provide them with new problem-solving strategies. This could include training on best practices in designing multimodal transportation systems, how to develop new transportation performance measures that match community goals, and how land use and transportation interact to impact health equity.



*Streets in Decatur, GA where the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and the CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity have convened the Walkability Action Institute in for the last five years. Photos courtesy of the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors.*

**FEATURE**

## Walkability Action Institute

The Walkability Action Institute (WAI), a project of the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and the CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, brings together interdisciplinary teams representing public health, transportation, planning, elected officials, and other disciplines from regions and states across the country to receive training on how to improve walkability and rollability through changes to policies, systems, and the built environment that can influence community and transportation design. Over five years, WAI has trained 51 interdisciplinary teams from 31 states and

tracks their progress on a number of outcomes including policy and system changes, new tools, and changes to the environment. For example, after attending the institute, Greenville, NC was equipped to take several steps to improve walking and rolling in their community including getting public health representation on the steering committee for their Active Transportation Master Plan, hosting walk audits with decision-makers, and adding wayfinding signs.

**Learn more** about the Walkability Action Institute at https://www.chronicdisease.org/page/WAI.





*Cross sector teams working together at a Complete Streets workshop in Nappanee, IN. Photos courtesy of Smart Growth America.*

## FEATURE

## Advancing regional & local Complete Streets in the Michiana Area

In 2017, the National Complete Streets Coalition worked with the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) to advance a regional Complete Streets strategy and assist three rural communities within the Michiana area with developing Complete Streets policies. Through a competitive application process, MACOG selected the City of Plymouth, the City of Warsaw/Town of Winona Lake, and City of Goshen to receive Complete Streets technical assistance. The in-person workshops provided an in-depth look at strategies to communicate, measure, and implement both regional and local Complete Streets. Since the workshop, both MACOG and the City of Plymouth have adopted strong Complete Streets policies.

**Learn more** about MACOG and Complete Streets on their website at http://www.macog.com/transportation.html.

STRATEGY 3.5

## INSTITUTIONALIZE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HEALTH AND TRANSPORTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| n/a | Advocates | Process, People |

**Challenge:** Higher education institutions are not preparing transportation practitioners to fully understand the impact transportation has on public health.

**Strategy**: There is an opportunity to strengthen the connection between health and transportation in higher education. For example, better training our engineers and planners to understand the health and equity implications of transportation decisions on the built environment and better training public health and medical professionals about the impact of transportation. Students who will impact the built environment should be required to take classes on the history of land use and how communities have been shaped or displaced over time.

STRATEGY 3.6

## PREPARE FOR NEW MOBILITY AND TECHNOLOGY

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Elected Officials, Transportation Leadership, Advocate | Politics, Policy |

**Challenge:** Emerging mobility and technology tools and platforms, often referred to as new mobility, can provide a platform to engage new partners and redefine our transportation system. Despite the nuances of these emerging options and tools, many elected leaders perceive them as unequivocally good or bad.

**Strategy**: Advocates should capitalize on the attention of new mobility to highlight transportation inequities and ensure that disenfranchised communities aren't left further behind. Decision-makers need to understand that these tools will not solve broader transportation challenges alone and are not a replacement for strategic, intentional policy decisions. To ensure new mobility doesn't negatively impact communities or lead to further displacement, communities should be educated and equipped to work with governments and private industry to use new mobility as a tool to improve and expand their transportation choices and access to jobs and opportunity. In addition, the advent of new mobility tools offer opportunities for communities to implement demonstration projects to better understand how new mobility can improve access, especially for the most disenfranchised.



*Smart Cities Collaborative touring innovative mobility solutions in Pittsburgh, PA (top) and during a panel discussion in Atlanta (bottom). Photos courtesy of Smart Growth America.*

## Micromobility Playbook

The Micromobility Playbook is an online resource for shared micromobility policy. Shared micromobility refers to any small, human or electric-powered transportation solution such as bikes, e-bikes, scooters, and e-scooters. The playbook explores eight core policy components, including general provisions, operations, equipment & safety, parking & street design, equity, communications & community engagement, and data metrics. Created by Transportation for America and cities that were a part of the Smart Cities Collaborative, it is intended for use by local governments of all sizes when considering how to introduce new micromobility technology within their communities.

**Learn more** about the Micromobility Playbook at https://playbook.t4america.org/.

# Prioritize historically underrepresented communities in transportation decision-making

Historically, disenfranchised communities of all sizes, have held very little power in influencing the transportation decision-making process. The National Environmental Protection Act and other government practices required governments to solicit community feedback on federally-funded infrastructure projects. However, this engagement is only required when the design of the project is 30 percent complete, which is long after the purpose and scope of projects are already set. Further, this community engagement often happens in the form of an open house or public meeting that governments plan, intentionally and unintentionally, at inconvenient times and locations.

Moreover community engagement is often seen as an add-on to project budgets and consequently is insufficiently funded. This means that while government agencies might be fulfilling "engagement" on a checklist for a transportation project or plan, they fail to set up a process or environment where they are legitimately collecting and integrating feedback that is representative of the whole community to actually impact the design or implementation of a project.

Many of the symptoms of poor community engagement derive from two root causes. First, transportation agencies and elected officials are unwilling to give up or share power and control, so community engagement lacks the intention of gathering information to truly guide projects and plans. Second, after decades of being negatively impacted by implicitly or explicitly racist policies and leadership, many communities have a level of distrust of government that disincentivizes their participation.

Transportation agencies must value the communities most impacted by projects and their feedback, leadership, and lived experiences as much, or more than, traditional transportation professionals.

Authentic, meaningful community engagement should be a collaborative, not extractive, process. It requires an intentional allocation of both time and resources and should focus on listening to the voices that have been excluded or isolated.

STRATEGY 4.1

## GIVE UP POWER AND MAKE SPACE FOR DISENFRANCHISED COMMUNITIES TO DRIVE DECISION-MAKING

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioners | Policy |

**Challenge:** Transportation decisions made by agencies, departments, and elected officials have not had disenfranchised communities' best interests in mind, nor have decision-making structures provided space for people, especially within lower-income communities or communities of color, to shape decisions regarding transportation infrastructure in their neighborhoods. Community expertise and experience should be the bedrock of decision-making; however, government structures do not value or trust the knowledge of the community.

**Strategy:** To ensure the transportation decision-making process is equitable moving forward, transportation agencies need to rebalance decision-making power. This could take a number of different formats including changing project selection criteria to give more weight to community input, or requiring (and compensating) diverse community representation during transportation improvement conversations. Using a community-based participatory decision-making structure can improve both accountability and trust with the communities being served.

> You can't get policy change without communities of color and low-income communities having power and agency over the tools used to implement and put in place policy.

*Anita Cozart*
*Former Managing Director, PolicyLink*

STRATEGY 4.2

## REMOVE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioners | Policy, Process |

**Challenge:** Historically, disenfranchised communities have not held power in the transportation decision-making process. This is often intentional and is one example of how structural racism plays out in transportation. Numerous barriers contribute to the lack of community power in the process. Many people are not able to participate in public meetings or community engagement around a transportation project or plan because the meetings are at inconvenient times or inaccessible places, and childcare, food, translators, and reasonable accommodations—as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—are not provided. This is further exacerbated in rural communities where there are no transit choices. Sometimes there is a lack of awareness or outreach that decisions are happening in the first place. More broadly, there is often a significant distrust of government, which government does nothing to repair through the engagement process.

**Strategy:** Transportation agencies must remove the barriers to participation in the transportation decision-making process and ensure there is a space for communities to drive decision-making. To do this transportation agencies must:

- **Prioritize disenfranchised community members in decision-making.** Whose voices historically have not been heard in decision-making? How can processes and systems prioritize those voices?

- **Account for time and timing in the process.** How much time and resources are allocated to work with the community? At what point in the process does engagement occur? What time of day? Agencies must recognize that time is a limited commodity and they must take every step to bring the opportunities to influence decision-making processes to people, not make communities come to them.

- **Consider the origin of the ideas and solutions.** Do they come from community members? Do they come from conference rooms in government buildings?

- **Give stakeholders the resources they need to effectively engage.**
    - Provide child support, translation services, reasonable accommodations, and food at gatherings.
    - Create a safe and accessible environment for discussion. Set meeting rules around speech and "do no harm."
    - Use a wide-ranging set of strategies to engage.
    - Offer stipends to community members.

- **Ensure language is accessible.** Transportation agencies, as well as advocates, policy makers, and media, must make sure their communications are accessible to all and should follow language access laws, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

- **Articulate the timeline.** When will the community next hear from the transportation professionals? When will the information shared today be used?

- **Work with other government agencies, like public health or housing, to gather feedback.** Providing feedback, especially if it is the same feedback over and over again, can be extremely burdensome for communities. When appropriate, government agencies should work together to gather feedback.

- **Be clear about how the feedback is going to be used.** How will the shared opinions, perspectives, and feedback inform decisions on future projects or policies?

**RESOURCE: Setting expectations about feedback and how it will be used**
The Spectrum of Public Participation, a resource created by the International Association for Public Participation, can be used by government entities to help set expectations with the community about why they are seeking feedback and how the input will be used. For example, if a transportation agency wants to simply inform the public about a project, the "goal" is to provide information to understand the project, and the "promise" is to inform.

**Learn more** and view the Spectrum of Public Participation at https://www.iap2usa.org/resources/Documents/Core%20Values%20Awards/IAP2%20-%20Spectrum%20-%20stand%20alone%20document.pdf.

STRATEGY 4.3

## HIRE STAFF WHO ARE REFLECTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY AND PAY COMMUNITY CONSULTANTS FOR THEIR EXPERTISE

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership | People |

**Challenge:** Both permanent employees and contracted staff who work on transportation projects and conduct community engagement often do not look like—or have the same lived experience as—the community they are working in and serving. What's more, when the government and other organizations in power reach out to disenfranchised communities for feedback, they often expect community members to give their time for free, without valuing the contribution they are providing.

**Strategy:** Both permanent employees and contracted staff should reflect the community that they are serving both demographically and geographically. Working with historically disenfranchised community groups, experts, and local champions, and compensating them for their expertise, is one way to ensure that there is equitable community representation in the decision-making process.



*Nine community members were hired as "trusted advocates" to engage underrepresented community members about upcoming transit investments and ensure their voices were heard. Photo courtesy of Carol Swenson.*

**FEATURE**

## Trusted Advocate Pilot
(Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN)

To ensure diverse community voices guided the METRO Green Line transit study in the Twin Cities, Metro Transit partnered with the District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC) to hire nine community members to act as trusted advocates. The nine individuals used a variety of engagement techniques to engage underrepresented people, specifically African American, new immigrant, disability, low-income, and student populations, and gather their thoughts. In addition to increasing representation of underrepresented voices within the study

and producing a transit service plan that better met community needs, project stakeholders concluded that no matter the engagement strategy, what it really comes down to is trust between public agencies and communities.

**Learn more** about the Trusted Advocate Pilot Program in the study report at https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2FNLhwQPAA5RDh6YkpsRW9aTkdEaXFuekd2cHNWcnZOQnlV and https://www.metrotransit.org/central-transit-study.

STRATEGY 4.4

## ORGANIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED CAPACITY BUILDING

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioners, Elected officials | People |

**Challenge:** Transportation departments and community members both lack knowledge about and perspectives of the other party. This creates communication barriers and perpetuates a process in which community members are only engaged in decision-making at a very shallow level. Transportation departments often only show up in communities either physically or electronically when they need to gather feedback rather than building sustained relationships. More often than not, to check the "community engagement" box, transportation professionals will set up project-specific meetings in communities to gather feedback when it is convenient to the agency. On the other hand, community members often lack more specific transportation know-how, like transportation practices, terminology, and how decisions are made.

**Strategy:** The gaps in knowledge and understanding of transportation departments and communities is an opportunity for shared capacity building. Shared capacity building is more than just educating one side or the other during one-off engagements. Instead it is providing time and space for co-learning and co-creation and committing to a transparent, long-term community engagement process. During shared capacity building engagements, community members and transportation professionals can ask and answer questions, share their perspectives, and build stronger working relationships.

*Placemaking in San Diego, one of six cities who participated in the Cultural Corridor Consortium. Photo courtesy of Transportation for America.*

## Cultural Corridor Consortium

Between 2015 and 2018, Transportation for American worked with cohorts of local leaders, artists, city officials, and arts administrators from six cities as part of the Cultural Corridor Consortium (3C). The 3C program focused on how to incorporate artistic and cultural practices into the planning and design of transportation projects and use those same practices to expand transportation opportunities and local control for low-income people, recent immigrants, and people of color living in disinvested communities. The program was specifically designed to create a culture of investing in transportation projects *in partnership* with communities, not *to or on* communities. In one 3C community, Dothan, AL (population, 68,202) the city used the funding to work with a local arts organizations to engage the historically ignored African American community in the planning process of a major corridor in the city.

**Learn more** about the 3C program at http://t4america.org/cultural-corridor-consortium/.

STRATEGY 4.5

## USE CREATIVITY AND FUN TO HELP PRODUCE BETTER OUTCOMES

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioners | Process, Practice |

**Challenge:** Neither elected officials nor communities members want to get involved with uninspired, dull policies or programs. However, the status quo in transportation can often be just that. It's not enough that the policy or program is "good;" it has to inspire people.

**Strategy:** Transportation agencies and organizations are successful when they are creative in delivering messages and make it a joyful experience. This could entail getting elected officials on bikes, holding community meals, painting crosswalks, or using interactive flashcards to explain transportation terms.



*Asian Media Access used stencils and sidewalk drawings to encourage walkability within Minnesota's immigrant and refugee communities. Photo courtesy of Asian Media Access.*

## Making engagement fun

Asian Media Access (AMA) has been serving immigrants and refugees in Minnesota since 1992 and strongly believes that community perspective needs to be the foundation for any discussion on transportation policy or design. AMA uses a variety of techniques to better engage the immigrant and refugee community, including spray painting multilingual stencils on sidewalks to encourage walkability, hosting hot pot dinners to encourage deep and thoughtful community discussion, and using Storybird (an online resource to create visual stories) to make sure seniors' voices are heard.

**Learn more** about Asian Media Access programming at http://amamedia.org/ and http://ballequity.amamedia.org/bicultural-healthy-living-strategy/complete-street/.

# Work in unison to provide people-focused infrastructure

## Siloed disciplines prevent holistic solutions

Historically, our government departments and agencies operate in silos. At every level of government, transportation, health, housing, and planning agencies have operated in their own spheres of influence, with equity treated as an afterthought if at all.

But our communities do not operate in these same silos, and government agencies are not the only influence shaping them. Community-based organizations, elected officials, businesses, and others each have a role to play. Decisions about transportation are often made in isolation from other decisions about a community's infrastructure or built environment. Yet in reality there is a complex network of decisions with overlapping influence that can only be addressed by partnering across departments and disciplines.

Government agencies and departments must work in unison to provide people-centered infrastructure.

STRATEGY 5.1

## BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioner, Advocate | Process |

**Challenge:** Transportation is more than just technical execution and therefore needs more than just technical representatives, like engineers and planners. The process needs to make space for community members and leaders, public health professionals, land use experts, and housing officials to shape our transportation systems.

**Strategy:** Partnerships are an opportunity to identify common strategies that can help agencies or organizations reach their specific goals. These partnerships take forms ranging from committees representing multiple sectors to informal community networks. One way to shift how our systems are built is to shift the way we think about those systems. In an ideal world, a flicked switch would allow us to see things through the eyes of various partners, but that isn't reality. Building formal and informal partnerships can help us see the impact of our work from different perspectives.



*Team working together on case study activity as part of the Colorado Complete Streets Consortium Series. Photo courtesy of Smart Growth America.*

**FEATURE**

## Colorado Complete Streets Consortium

In 2018, the National Complete Streets Coalition brought together cohorts of planners, engineers, public health professions and more from three Denver suburbs to learn about tools and strategies to implement equitable Complete Streets that would reflect each community's goals. The Colorado Complete Streets Consortium Series was successful in equipping each community with a plan for Complete Streets implementation and helping them collaborate productively across departments and jurisdictions. As a result of the Consortium, all three suburbs have launched cross-departmental and cross-jurisdictional working groups to develop custom Complete Streets ordinances for their communities.

STRATEGY 5.2

# BUILD POLITICAL CAPITAL

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Advocate | Politics |

**Challenge:** Without political will from elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels, government agencies lack the internal support to make steady, significant progress toward creating transportation systems and development patterns that support multimodal travel. Not only do elected officials make transportation funding decisions, they can catalyze or stop the development of transportation projects. However, currently there are few elected officials who understand transportation's role in health equity and who support changes to the status quo.

**Strategy**: Advocates should work to educate elected officials on transportation's role in health and how it affects their constituents. This means crafting our messages to speak to what many elected officials care about—often, how their decisions impact jobs and the economy. In addition, when elected officials do make better transportation decisions, advocates should leverage a broad base of support to recognize that leadership and back those decisions in the media and with the public. Advocates should also provide electeds with information and talking points they can use when supporting good transportation decisions. Conversely, advocates should hold elected officials accountable when they do not make good decisions by publicly calling them out.
*Refer to Strategy 1 for more information about crafting effective messages.*

## FEATURE

Councilmember champions road diet effort in Atlanta
(Atlanta, GA)

Memorial Drive in Atlanta is an east-west road that serves eight neighborhoods, five schools, and a number of apartments and homes. Despite that, in 2014 Memorial Drive felt more like a highway than a street connecting neighborhoods. Concerned about the safety of Memorial Drive, Councilmember

Natalyn Archibong, supported by local advocates, commissioned a study of the corridor in 2014 by Georgia Tech's School of City & Regional Planning, which led to the creation of a full-time planning and coordination role funded by stakeholders on the corridor. This role led years of coalition-building with neighborhood organizations, property owners, elected officials, and public agencies to advocate for pedestrian and motorist safety improvements on Memorial Drive. In 2019, thanks to Archibong's leadership, and countless hours of volunteer involvement from residents and advocates, the City of Atlanta and the Georgia Department of Transportation officially installed a road diet, turning the two inside lanes into one center lane, significantly improving the safety of the roadway.

**Learn more** about Memorial Drive from the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition at https://www.atlantabike.org/memorial_drive.

STRATEGY 5.3

## CREATE A DIVERSE BASE OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS WITHIN INTERNAL GOVERNMENT TEAMS



LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT          RESPONSIBILITY                    5 PS

All              Transportation Leadership          People

**Challenge:** Currently, most government departments hire and retain staff who are trained in the department's areas of work. For example, transportation departments hire traffic engineers and departments of health hire epidemiologists.

**Strategy:** There is value in building teams that represent a variety of skills and perspectives, which can help to bridge understanding between the typical silos of operation. For example, hiring people with health backgrounds in transportation departments and transportation professionals in health departments is an effective way to institutionalize a better understanding of impacts within teams.

**FEATURE**

## Rotational fellowship in city government

(Washington, DC)

Capital City Fellows Program (CCFP) is a fellowship program for recent graduates of master's degree programs to work for the city of Washington, DC. The 18-month fellowship consists of three six-month terms in different city agencies or departments where fellows are able to build a deep, more holistic understanding of the role of city government.

**Learn more** about the Capital City Fellows Program at https://dchr.dc.gov/page/capital-city-fellows-program.

STRATEGY 5.4

## OFFER TRAININGS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Advocate | Policy |

**Challenge:** Just as government departments hire and retain staff exclusive to their area of work, they rarely offer or send staff to participate in cross-disciplinary trainings with other departments.

**Strategy:** Engaging in focused trainings across disciplines (outside of one's specialty) is one way for professionals from a variety of sectors, like public health and transportation, to build a more holistic understanding of how each sector contributes to a specific project. Training across disciplines provides a platform for people to come together, build trust, and collaboratively work to make change.

*Panel discussion at Intersections: Creating Culturally Complete Streets in Nashville, TN. Photo courtesy of LeXander Bryant.*

**FEATURE**

## Intersections: Creating Culturally Complete Streets
(Nashville, TN)

In Spring 2018, Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition brought together two distinct disciplines: transportation and the arts, for a first-ever conference focused on Complete Streets implementation, creative placemaking, and equity. *Intersections* attendees included planners, artists, engineers, and public health advocates, who all came together in Nashville, TN to share stories and strategies and build partnerships across communities and disciplines.

> "In 2018, I received an ArtPlace America scholarship to attend Intersections in Nashville. It was a turning point for my work, and the session with Oboi Reed on the power of place and mobility as vehicles for community transformation particularly resonated with me. I learned that walking, biking and art can be used as a strategy for neighborhood transformation. Increasingly, my work has focused on arts-based neighborhood organizing. I helped secure a nearly $3 million infrastructure investment for my neighborhood. I also helped raise $35,000 from developers, local businesses, and private foundations to pay artists during Open Streets Nashville."
>
> *M. Simone Boyd*
> *Novelist & Neighborhood Organizer in Nashville, TN*

**Learn more** about *Intersections: Creating Culturally Complete Streets* at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/intersections-planting-seeds-greater-movement/.

> I learned that walking, biking and art can be used as a strategy for neighborhood transformation.
>
> *M. Simone Boyd*
> *Novelist & Neighborhood Organizer in Nashville, TN*

STRATEGY 5.5

## MAKE THE TRANSPORTATION DECISION-MAKING PROCESS EASY TO UNDERSTAND

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioner, | Process |

**Challenge:** Transportation decision-making is complicated and difficult to understand for elected officials, public health professionals, and the public. (Sometimes it's even difficult for transportation professionals to understand.) It's rarely clear how decisions are made, so most people believe it to be a completely political process determined by influence.

**Strategy**: To break down silos, decision-making processes need to be more accessible, which means simplifying, avoiding jargon, providing a variety of avenues on a more regular basis to share perspectives, and working closely with "translators"—people or groups who can act as connectors between other sectors, communities, and transportation professionals. This is especially important when setting long-term transportation goals and plans.



*Every Place Counts Leadership Academy training in Kansas City, Missouri. Photo courtesy of United States Department of Transportation.*

**FEATURE**

Breaking down the transportation decision-making process

The Every Place Counts Leadership Academy was created by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to demystify the transportation decision-making process. When it was first released, USDOT held a number of in-person workshops across the country. While they are no longer providing those in-person trainings, they host several related resources on their website, including a toolkit for individual learning as well as a facilitator guide for holding your own leadership academy.

**Learn more** about Every Place Counts at https://www.transportation.gov/leadershipacademy.

STRATEGY 5.6

# SHARE RESOURCES ACROSS ORGANIZATIONS AND DEPARTMENTS

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| All | Transportation Leadership, Transportation Practitioner | Policy |

**Challenge:** Data analysis and use of technology like mapping can provide a more complete understanding of community needs, leading to better transportation projects. However, organizations, like government agencies and community based groups, often create similar maps or datasets and potentially duplicate efforts.

**Strategy:** Sharing resources like databases, maps, narratives, and analyses across organizations would improve collaboration, reduce costs, and provide an opportunity to work toward similar goals and visions. Agencies and organizations might consider formalizing resource sharing by adopting data sharing agreements or other tools to improve sharing. There is also an opportunity to collaborate with academic institutions and think tanks to use existing data sets.

## FEATURE

### Denver Neighborhood Equity Index
(Denver, CO)

The Denver Neighborhood Equity Index, created by the City of Denver, maps socioeconomic, built environment, health care, and health barriers faced by Denver residents. The online tool is accessible to all individuals, organizations, and government agencies and is seen as a resource to help decision-makers understand where investment and resources are needed most to ensure each resident can achieve their full potential.

**Learn more** about the Dever Neighborhood Equity Index at https://geospatialdenver.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=2f30c73e83204e96824a14680a62a18e.

STRATEGY 5.7

# BUILD PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | All | Process |

**Challenge:** Transportations decisions often take a long time to translate into changes. For example, even if the decision to build a new project happens quickly, it might take five to 10 years to complete. A community or elected official may lose momentum if they cannot quickly see their work realized. In addition, because transportation infrastructure implies a certain sort of permanency, transportation departments are hesitant to try out new tactics or commit to non-traditional permanent infrastructure.

**Strategy**: State and local DOTs should formally recognize demonstration projects as part of the project development process. Demonstration projects are a great opportunity for departments and organizations to temporarily partner and produce a tangible project, gather community feedback, raise awareness of non-traditional transportation solutions, and build relationships across departments. Demonstration projects can be led by community members, transportation or health agencies, elected officials, or other relevant stakeholders. Regardless of who leads the demonstration project, they should be community-driven.



*Orlando's demonstration project on Curry Ford Road. Photo courtesy of the City of Orlando.*

**FEATURE**

City and county work together to transform five-lane speedway into a three-lane Complete Street
(Orlando, FL)

As part of Smart Growth America's Safe Streets Academy, a team from the City of Orlando that included professionals from transportation, public health, and law enforcement, worked closely with the county and elected officials on a demonstration project to transform a dangerous five-lane county-owned road into a three-lane Complete Street. Through collaborating on this project, the city and county forged a partnership to work on safety and other similar projects in the future.

**Learn more** about Orlando's experience in transforming a commercial arterial at https://smartgrowthamerica.org/orlando-fl-demonstration-project-curry-ford-road/.

# Invest in communities without displacement

## Displacement is the result of unmanaged development and insufficient investment in people.

The U.S. has a long history of displacing people of color in the name of prosperity. Consequently any discussion on displacement must start with that historical context. There are countless examples of the federal government taking action resulting in displacement of people. For example, in the 1830s, the federal government violently removed tribal nations in the southeast to make room for white settlers. Later in the 1860s as part of the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, the government oversaw the displacement of indigenous peoples from their traditional hunting grounds.[36] Intentional displacement practices remained in the 20th century with government sanctioned private policies like mortgage redlining and racially restrictive covenants defining where African Americans and other people of color could or could not live.[37] As a result of these policies, minority communities did not receive the same level of public investment as white

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36  Digital Public Library of America. Building the First Transcontinental Railroad. Retrieved from https://dp.la/exhibitions/transcontinental-railroad/human-impact/native-americans?item=937.
37  Rothstein, R. (2017). The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. Print.

neighborhoods in suburbs, which resulted in lower property values, reduced tax base, accelerated vacancy rates, and in effect destroyed their once stable economy. And now new market demand for walkable, rollable places is a leading "economic development strategy" for communities to attract reinvestment or white-wealth-controlled capital, thus displacing the original population.

Displacement, whether by disinvestment, reinvestment, or market competition, is painful and disruptive for individuals and communities. People are uprooted from their homes and social support networks, and that resulting psychological and cultural trauma of "un-homing" can persist for generations.[38] When the people of the community change, historic businesses see their customer base decrease, and consequently locally-owned businesses find themselves forced to close. Even the long-time resident who may still be able to afford to remain in a neighborhood may choose to move because the character of their community has changed to the point that they no longer feel welcome.

Those who are displaced are often forced to move to areas that are more affordable but lack transportation options. This typically makes it much harder to access employment, health care, healthy food, places of worship, education, and social networks. The most significant economic impact on households is the expense of relying on cars—which cost almost $9,000 a year to own and maintain—just to access basic necessities like jobs and healthcare.[39] It can also impact a household's health, since the suburban built environment is generally less conducive to physical activity—like the incidental physical activity of walking or rolling to transit or to the corner store in more urban environments.[40]

Today's displacement continues to be inextricably tied to prosperity. Improving or investing in communities—even in beneficial ways—such as improving a transit system, adding bike lanes, or investing in better pedestrian connections, often makes it more attractive to live there, which increases the market value of those neighborhoods, especially if these amenities are denied in other areas of the region. Conversely, when a neighborhood's land value starts to increase, cities or agencies make additional investments to improve its transportation system. And in cases where cities try to add affordable housing so mixed-income families can live in existing neighborhoods with access to transit and other amenities, "not in my backyard" or "NIMBY" proponents block the effort. While these investments could be good for neighborhoods, without comprehensive anti-displacement prevention policies addressing modern day redlining or "not in my backyard" opposition, low-income people or people of color will continue to be displaced or denied access to places of opportunity.[41]

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38  Elliott-Cooper, A., Hubbard, P., & Lees, L. (2019). Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, displacement and the violence of un-homing. Progress in Human Geography. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519830511

39  AAA Newsroom. (2018). Your Driving Costs. Retrieved from https://newsroom.aaa.com/auto/your-driving-costs/.

40  Sarkar, C, Webster, C, Gallacher, J. (2017, October). Association between adiposity outcomes and residential density: a full-data, cross-sectional analysis of 419 562 UK Biobank adult participants. The Lancet. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(17)30119-5.

41  The Center for Investigative Reporting. Modern-Day Redlining. Retrieved from https://apps.revealnews.org/redlining/.

While some studies show that most recent waves of displacement may not be as extensive as previously understood, fears and concerns of displacement are still widespread and guide the way that communities consider investments in their neighborhoods.[42] For that reason alone, transportation agencies must not write-off displacement as an issue that only affects a select number of neighborhoods in the U.S.

This is where transportation, public health, and housing must come together to ensure accessible, affordable communities for all. Transportation investments can improve health outcomes in communities, but to achieve that we need to ensure that those who live there (and suffer the most) can benefit from the improvements and aren't just displaced to another area with bad outcomes. Because too often with this topic, it is a conversation of "how can our historically disinvested, disenfranchised communities survive?" instead of "how can our historically disinvested, disenfranchised communities thrive?" As community members, policy makers, transportation and health professionals, land-use experts, and advocates wrestle with this issue, the focus should be on thriving, not simply surviving.

STRATEGY 6.1

## MEASURE DISPLACEMENT AND REWARD PROJECTS THAT ALLOW RESIDENTS TO REMAIN IN PLACE

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Transportation Leadership, Advocate | Policy |

**Challenge:** Transportation agencies often do not consistently or holistically measure the impacts that transportation improvements will have on current residents, such as displacement resulting from increased value of real estate or attractiveness. These agencies must ensure that they are not displacing communities by investing in their infrastructure.

**Strategy:** Through modeling, transportation agencies could predict the displacement effects of a project. For projects predicted to cause displacement, project budgets must include commensurate resources for the community to counteract this disruption. Project selection criteria could prioritize projects that provide commensurate resources.

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42  Richardson, J., Mitchell, B., and Franco, J. (2019, March). Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and cultural displacement in American cities. Retrieved from https://ncrc.org/gentrification/.

**FEATURE**

Understanding risk of displacement and access to opportunity
(Seattle, WA)

When the City of Seattle updated its Comprehensive Plan, the city took care to assess demographic, economic, and physical factors to understand risk of displacement and access to opportunity in Seattle. Through its Growth and Equity analysis, the city put together a Displacement Risk Index and Access to Opportunity Index that found that "the displacement risk is highest in neighborhoods that have historically been home to communities of color [and that] access to opportunity for marginalized populations is not equitably distributed."[43] The analysis informed the comprehensive plan and its strategies to lessen impacts and maximize opportunity for marginalized populations.

**Learn more** about the City of Seattle's efforts to understand the risk of displacement and access to opportunity at http://www.seattle.gov/opcd/ongoing-initiatives/comprehensive-plan# projectdocuments.

STRATEGY 6.2

## STRENGTHEN GUARDRAILS ON EXISTING INVESTMENT TOOLS

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| Federal | Elected Official, Advocate | Policy |
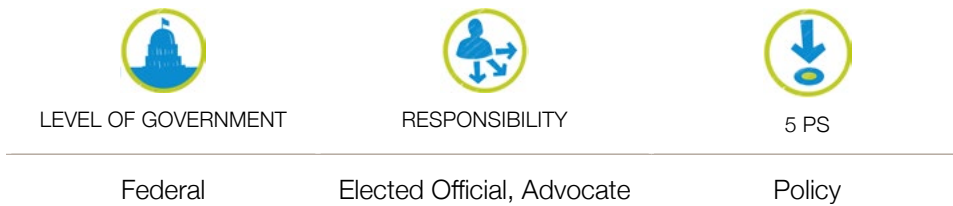
**Challenge:** Strong anti-displacement transportation policies alone will not solve the issue. To curb displacement, governments must first adopt policies that address increasing land value. At the federal level, programs and incentives like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, Fair Housing Act, and Opportunity Zones, while useful tools, are in need of considerable attention and improvements to be most effective in building communities that allow those who live there or are most in need to thrive.

**Strategy:** The federal government must improve guardrails on existing investment tools, like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, Fair Housing Act, and Opportunity Zones program.

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43   City of Seattle Department of Planning and Community Development. Seattle 2035 Equity Analysis. Retrieved from https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/2035EquityAnalysisSummary.pdf.

- The **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit** is a tool to expand affordable rental housing. Between 1986 and 2017, 3.13 million affordable housing units have been placed in service.[44] However, the program is restrictive. It has never met demand and never will. Without updating the parameters of the program, it will continue to fail to serve the lowest income households, fall short in providing accessible housing, and excacerbate racial segregation.[45]

- The **Fair Housing Act**, passed in 1968, strives to prevent discrimination and reverse housing segregation, but it only does so much.[46] This act has not acknowledged the problems created by concentrating poverty.

- The federal **Opportunity Zones tax incentive**, created in 2017, provides tax incentives to investors to re-invest their unrealized capital gains into certain designated, distressed communities.[47] However, the program needs better guardrails, like requiring investors to meet with local stakeholders (including residents) to discuss the future of development within the community, and requiring data be collected to inform the program's impact and effectiveness and inform future reform. The program needs to ensure that the receiving communities and their residents actually benefit from the investment.

STRATEGY 6.3

## IMPROVE STRATEGIC COORDINATION BETWEEN TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND LAND USE

**Challenge:** In the U.S., households spend more than half of their income on housing and transportation costs combined.[48] This is due partially to a lack of strategic coordination between transportation, housing, and land use to create affordable, accessible communities. This has contributed to displacement and forced low-income communities and communities of color to move to places that restrict their ability to prosper. To prevent displacement, communities need to be more affordable, and for this to happen, the transportation sector needs to work closely with housing and land-use stakeholders.

44  U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research. (2019, May). Low-income Housing Tax Credits. Retrieved from https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/lihtc.html.
45  Payton Scally, C., Gold, A., and DuBois, N. (2018, July). The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit: How It Works and Who It Serves. Urban Institute. Retrieved from https://www.urban.org/research/publication/low-income-housing-tax-credit-how-it-works-and-who-it-serves/view/full_report.
46  National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2018, October). Fair Housing Act Overview and Challenges. Retrieved from https://nlihc.org/resource/fair-housing-act-overview-and-challenges.
47  LOCUS. (2018). National Opportunity Zone Ranking Report. Retrieved from https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/locus-opportunity-zones-national-ranking-report/
48  U.S. Department of Transportation. (2016, February). Housing And Transportation Affordability. Retrieved from https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/housing-and-transportation-affordability.

> If we don't think about health, and especially health equity, while making land-use decisions, we won't get anywhere.

*C.J. Eisenbarth Hager*
*Director of Healthy Communities,*
*Vitalyst Health Foundation*

SUB-STRATEGY 6.3.1

## Update zoning practices to encourage compact, walkable development

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Elected officials, Transportation Leadership, Advocates | Policy |

Communities will only be able to create an affordable, attainable, safe transportation system if housing and land-use policies and practices are updated to encourage compact, walkable, rollable development with affordable housing and a variety of destinations and services within easy distance. If homes are located a 20-minute drive from the grocery store and another 15-minute drive from the doctor's office, neither of which are on people's way home from job centers, communities will never be able to achieve that affordable, attainable, safe transportation system.

**FEATURE**

## Updating accessory dwelling unit policies (Seattle, WA)

The Seattle City Council adopted an ordinance in 2016 intended to create more affordable housing options and additional income for homeowners interested in renting out space. The ordinance removed barriers to the creation of attached and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and added a floor area ratio requirement (FAR) in certain single-family zones. The new rules removed the requirement that homeowners in single-family zones live onsite, allowing ADUs to be built on rental properties. They also stopped requiring an off-street parking spot for each ADU, allowing homeowners without off-street parking to rent out ADUs. Size restrictions have also been eased to allow for larger and taller ADUs.

**Learn more** about the ordinance at https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=7514429&GUID=17E4775D-351A-4695-BF72-64EC64A2E574.

**FEATURE**

Updating zoning practices

Both the City of Minneapolis and the State of Oregon recently updated their zoning practices to allow for increased housing access. The City of Minneapolis updated their comprehensive plan to allow for more housing choice in single-detached housing neighborhoods. In Oregon, the state passed a bill that will preclude zoning exclusively for single-detached housing in cities with populations larger than 25,000 across the state.

*Photo of people walking. Photo courtesy of Smart Growth America.*

**Learn more** about Minneapolis' comprehensive plan at https://minneapolis2040.com/ and about Oregon's bill at https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2001.

SUB-STRATEGY 6.3.2

**Invest in equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD)**

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| State, Local | Elected officials, Transportation Leadership, Advocates | Policy, Process |

Equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD) strives to "create and support communities of opportunity where residents of all incomes, ages, races, and ethnicities participate in and benefit from living in connected, healthy, vibrant places connected by transit."[49] The success of eTOD rests on using an inclusive planning process, which is essential to preventing displacement and ensuring current residents and businesses can benefit from the improvement. To be truly equitable, eTOD needs to prioritize accessible and affordable housing as well as the holistic affordability of a community, because it is counter-productive to provide accessible, affordable housing in an area where everything else is expensive.

49  MZ Strategies, LLC. (2016). Advancing Equitable Transit-Oriented Development through Community Partnerships and Public Sector Leadership. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5021cc16e4b0c203353d08c5/t/57fbc838e4fcb58bdf33c9ad/1476118586893/Community+Explainer_10-10-16.pdf.

**FEATURE**

Transit authority steps up with affordable housing (Los Angeles, California)

In 2015, the board of The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) adopted a policy that set in place specific objectives for affordable housing, specifically that "35% of all housing units in Metro joint developments, portfolio wide, will be affordable housing."[50] Since then Metro has been working to bridge the gap between housing, transportation, and land use through its Transit Oriented Communities (TOCs) program. Metro defines TOCs as "places that, by their design, make it more convenient to take transit, walk, bike or roll than to drive."[51] Through the TOC program, Metro is concurrently working on several initiatives, including working with affordable housing developers and local jurisdictions to create affordable housing near or at their transit stations.

**Learn more** about LA Metro's transit-oriented communities work at https://www.metro.net/projects/transit-oriented-communities/.

SUB-STRATEGY 6.3.3

## Coordinate early across sectors

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
|---|---|---|
| State, Local | Elected officials, Transportation Leadership, Advocates | Process |
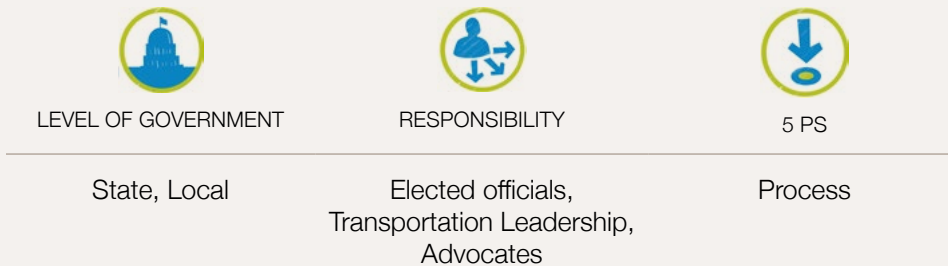
Meaningful coordination between transportation, housing, and land use cannot happen unless there is sufficient lead time for conversations between those decision-makers before transportation project scopes and budgets are set or development decisions are finalized. Early coordination is a fairly basic concept, but it is not implemented as often as it should be with transportation investments. By planning ahead, government agencies can allow for plenty of time to work collaboratively with advocates to set goals and parameters that reflect a community's vision to guide the future investment.

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50  Metro. Transit Oriented Communities. Retrieved from https://www.metro.net/projects/transit-oriented-communities/.
51  Metro. Transit Oriented Communities. Retrieved from https://www.metro.net/projects/transit-oriented-communities/.

STRATEGY 6.4

# BUILD SHARED PROSPERITY THROUGH TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT

| LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT | RESPONSIBILITY | 5 PS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| All | All | Policy |

**Challenge:** There has not been equal opportunity for all residents in the U.S. to accumulate wealth, as evident by rising income inequality.[52] Research indicates that an increasing share of the U.S. population is being left behind without the tools or resources needed to move up the economic ladder.[53] This is particularly true for people of color.[54]

**Strategy:** Transportation is one of many investments that shape a community's ability to prosper. Any transportation investment should consider the larger economic impact on its most disenfranchised communities and take action to build shared prosperity amongst residents. Below is a list of suggested tools and strategies that can be used to prioritize economic inclusion.

- **Use value capture tools to benefit existing residents.** Local government can use mechanisms like special assessment districts, tax increment financing, or land value taxation to capture and reinvest value in the community and existing local residents.[55]

- **Adopt community benefit agreements (CBAs).** CBAs are an economic empowerment tool where stakeholders can negotiate directly with developers for the benefits they want to see realized with the investment. This tool in particular is effective at ensuring that local residents, most frequently communities of color, can benefit.[56]

- **Implement equitable contracting and procurement.** Each year, municipalities and transportation agencies spend billions to build, operate, and maintain their transportation systems. Through equitable contracting and procurement practices, "cities can ensure that underrepresented entrepreneurs have access to these business opportunities."[57]

52  Greene, S., Pendall, R., Scott, M., and Lei, S. (2016, July). Open Cities: From Economic Exclusion to Urban Inclusion. Retreived from https://www.urban.org/research/publication/open-cities-economic-exclusion-urban-inclusion.
53  Berube, A., Bosland, J., Greene, S., and Rush, C. (2018, June). Building shared prosperity in America's cities. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/research/building-shared-prosperity-in-americas-cities/.
54  Badger, E., Cain Miller, C., Pearce, A., and Quealy, K. (20188, March). Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/19/upshot/race-class-white-and-black-men.html.
55  Reimagining the Civic Commons. (2018, October). Value Capture in the Commons. Retrieved from http://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2018/11/Final_RCC_Value-Capture_Updated-Oct-2018_Pages.pdf.
56  Policy Link. All-in-Cities Policy Toolkit. Retrieved from https://allincities.org/toolkit.
57  Policy Link. All-in-Cities Policy Toolkit. Retrieved from https://allincities.org/toolkit.

*An arts open house event where 11th Street Bridge Park engaged the community on cultural equity strategies. Photo courtesy of 11th Street Bridge Park.*

**FEATURE**

## 11th Street Bridge Park
(Washington, DC)

In Washington, DC the remnants of an old bridge are being transformed into an elevated park, which will be a new civic space for healthy recreation, environmental education, and the arts. The team at 11th Street Bridge Park has been working for years to ensure that the park will be a driver of inclusive development and that existing residents will benefit, especially those who live on the east side of the Anacostia river, which has experienced decades of disinvestment.

The team's equitable development plan outlines specific strategies to guide development in four key areas: workforce development, small business enterprises, housing, and arts & culture. For example, the Bridge Park will prioritize hiring neighborhood residents from underinvested areas, as well as harder-to-employ District residents for construction and post-construction jobs.

**Learn more** about the 11th Street Bridge Park and their Equitable Development Plan at https://bbardc.org/project/11th-street-bridge-park/.

# Methodology

Smart Growth America's qualitative research-based field scan of transportation and health equity included four key components:

1. A literature review of current practices, planning efforts, and studies in the transportation field.

2. Qualitative data collection through interviews with stakeholders and thought leaders.

3. Ground-truthing of qualitative findings through an in-person convening.

4. Narrative development and message-testing with policy makers and voters.

Smart Growth America (SGA) adhered to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) qualitative research guidelines to ensure that the study methodology was sound and fully addressed the following five key areas:

1. Levers of impact (policies and practices)

    ○ What are the most important levers in the transportation sector that will improve health equity?

    ○ Are there policies, practices, types of investments or partnership alternatives (e.g. public-private partnerships) which, if influenced or supported, make it more likely that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier?

2. Low-income communities and communities of color

    ○ What are the transportation policies and investments which most reduce health disparities for low-income communities or communities of color?

    ○ How do you build a community's capacity to impact funding and investment decisions, and ultimately project execution?

3. Places of impact

    ○ Are the transportation policies, practices, and investments that most impact health equity different for mid-sized cities, small towns, or rural areas?

- ○ Are there types of analyses or research that are underutilized in these areas, and can a typology of possible interventions be created that are customized for these places?

4. Culture
   - ○ How do we shift the culture of the transportation sector, and the mindset of transportation decision-makers, community members, and influencers to recognize that everyone deserves access to transportation alternatives?
   - ○ What are the best messages and communication channels to use to influence the sector?

5. Leadership
   - ○ Who are the most important people to target when trying to influence health equity in transportation?
   - ○ How do we expand the spectrum of leaders who can leverage transportation to decrease health inequities?

## DATA COLLECTION

SGA's research design is based on the grounded theory approach through which the hypothesis and data sample is iteratively developed and verified through a constant comparative analysis. SGA addressed the five key questions above using data collected through 85 key informant interviews with recognized experts in the field of transportation and health equity.

This included thought leaders and decision-makers across the following categories:
- elected officials
- built environment and public health professionals
- municipal/state/federal practitioners
- transportation decision-makers (engineers, planners, policy makers)
- community leaders who work at the intersection of public health and transportation
- academic researchers and consultants

SGA's objective is to ensure that the theory developed draws from data that represent the comprehensive experiences and insights of thought leaders and stakeholders across the diverse industries and sectors relevant to this work.

Unlike in a quantitative analysis, a methodologically rigorous qualitative analysis requires that the data sample size not be predetermined. SGA initially conducted interviews with a small, yet diverse group of experts recognized as leaders on transportation and health equity to pilot the initial interview guide. SGA used the following sampling methodologies to identify candidates for interviews:

- Stratified purposive sampling: SGA identified recognized experts in the fields of transportation and health equity. These experts intentionally represent a broad array of sectors and roles relevant to this work and also have experience working in communities ranging from small, rural towns to mid-size cities.

- Snowball sampling: throughout the interview process, SGA routinely asked the respondents to suggest additional contacts for the researchers to interview.

SGA conducted semi-structured interviews with respondents via phone. SGA staff developed a rigorous interview guide, which addressed the five key areas of study outlined above. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure that the data collected were reliable, and notes were taken. There was variation in the content of the interview due to their semi-structured format, which allows respondents to digress from the interview guide's key questions and discuss tangentially-related topics. The total number of interviews conducted was determined when the data reached a point of saturation or "the point at which no new information or themes were emerging from the data".[58] Case studies of specific, illustrative transportation initiatives to advance health equity were also identified during the semi-structured interviews.

## INTERVIEW APPROACH

SGA developed an interview guide that covered policies and practices, low-income communities and communities of color, places of impact, culture, and leadership. The interview questions were divided by each of the five themes and contained questions regarding the respondents experience as it relates to each theme. The interview guide aimed to comprehensively address how to impact health equity through public infrastructure investments in transportation, namely by answering the following questions:

- What are the most important levers of impact?
- What works best for low-income communities and communities of color?
- What works best for mid-sized cities, small towns, and rural areas?
- How do we create a cultural shift?
- How do we create more health equity leaders in transportation?

## ANALYSIS

Through the grounded theory approach, researchers adopted an inductive framework, i.e. the analysis was not based on a predetermined framework or structure. The researchers validated the data and ensured that the data were collected in a consistent manner. In addition, the researchers coded the data and analyzed it using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, which assisted the researchers in tying the data to the research objectives, distilling patterns, and identifying key themes that emerged throughout the data collection process.

## MEMBER CHECKING

After the data reached a point of saturation and the researchers analyzed the results, SGA developed the first version of this report titled *Transportation and Health Equity Field Scan Initial Findings*. The report was sent to respondents to discuss at an in-person convening, which served as the first format of member-checking. At the convening, SGA verified the interpretations and conclusions directly with the respondents. In addition to member-checking, the convening of national experts assisted in further distilling the themes that emerged through the analysis and contributed to the strategic planning process. After the convening, SGA incorporated feedback from the convening into the report and shared the updated draft with

58  Cohen, D, Crabtree, B. (July, 2006). Qualitative Research Guidelines Project. Retrieved from http://www.qualres.org/.

respondents. Respondents were provided another opportunity to provide feedback which informed the final version of the report.



*Participants at the in-person convening in St. Paul, MN. Photos courtesy of Smart Growth America.*

## POLLING DATA

Once key themes were verified by the respondents, results were tested through polling data among a broader audience to test how these messages resonated with diverse audiences.

## STRATEGIES MATRIX

| Strategy | Level of Government | | | Responsibility | | | | 5 Ps | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Federal | State | Local | Transport Leadership | Transport Practicioner | Elected Official | Advocate | Policy | Process | Politics | People | Practice |
| **Strategy 1 - Reframe the transportation conversation** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Connect transportation messages to issues people care about | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | | ● | | |
| 1.2 Educate the press | ● | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | | ● |
| 1.3 Use trusted messengers | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | | |
| 1.4 Use demonstration projects as a communication tool | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | ● |
| 1.5 Tell stories to change hearts and minds | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | ● | | |
| 1.6 Create and share case studies and easy to understand fact sheets | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | |
| **Strategy 2 - Allocate funding and resources equitably** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1.1 Connect people to destinations | ● | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | |
| 2.1.2 Set performance targets that will improve safety | ● | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | |
| 2.1.3 Pass a binding, federal Complete Streets policy | ● | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | |
| 2.2.1 Change agency culture to support multimodal transportation systems | | ● | | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | |
| 2.2.2 Create budget transparency | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.2.3 Adopt and implement policies that prioritize the needs of disenfranchised populations | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | | | |
| 2.3.1 Change the way we measure project performance | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | |
| 2.3.2 Prioritize and select projects that serve all users | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | | | |
| 2.3.3 Take time to make sure project scopes are correct | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | ● |
| 2.3.4 Integrate health into existing manuals and resources | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | |

## STRATEGIES MATRIX (continued)

| Strategy | Level of Government | | | Responsibility | | | | 5 Ps | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Federal | State | Local | Transport Leadership | Transport Practicioner | Elected Official | Advocate | Policy | Process | Politics | People | Practice |
| **Strategy 3 - Improve the quality and diversity of transportation leadership** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.1 Support and invest in the future of the field | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| 3.2 Hire more diverse decision-makers | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| 3.3 Redefine expertise within transportation departments | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| 3.4 Provide and require training for transportation professionals and decision-makers | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | ● | |
| 3.5 Institutionalize the connection between health and transportation in higher education | | | | | | | ● | | ● | | ● | |
| 3.6 Prepare for new mobility and technology | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| **Strategy 4 - Prioritize historically underrepresented communities in transportation decision-making** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.1 Give up power and make space for disenfranchised communities to drive decision-making | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | |
| 4.2 Remove barriers to participating in transportation decisions | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | | | |
| 4.3 Hire staff who are reflective of the community and pay community consultants for their expertise | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| 4.4 Organize opportunities for shared capacity building | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | | | ● | |
| 4.5 Use creativity and fun to help produce better outcomes | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | | | ● |

# STRATEGIES MATRIX (continued)

| Strategy | Level of Government | | | Responsibility | | | | 5 Ps | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Federal | State | Local | Transport Leadership | Transport Practicioner | Elected Official | Advocate | Policy | Process | Politics | People | Practice |
| **Strategy 5 - Work in unison to provide people-focused infrastructure** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5.1 Build partnerships and relationships across disciplines | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | | |
| 5.2 Build political capital | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | ● | | |
| 5.3 Create a diverse base of knowledge and skills within internal government teams | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| 5.4 Offer trainings across disciplines | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | |
| 5.5 Make the transportation decision-making process easy to understand | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | |
| 5.6 Share resources across organizations and departments | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | ● | | | | |
| 5.7 Build partnerships through demonstration projects | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | | |
| **Strategy 6 - Invest in communities without displacement** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6.1 Measure displacement and reward projects that allow residents to remain in place | | ● | ● | | | | ● | ● | | | | |
| 6.2 Strengthen guardrails on existing investment tools | ● | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | |
| 6.3.1 Update zoning practices to encourage compact, walkable development | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | | | |
| 6.3.2 Invest in equitable transit oriented development (eTOD) | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| 6.3.3 Coordinate early across sectors | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | | ● | | |
| 6.4 Build shared prosperity through transportation investment | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | |