

Mobilizing Justice Community of Practice Workshops: Findings and Recommendations

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BACKGROUND

Over the course of 2024, The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) hosted a series of five workshops, convening a Community of Practice of community organizations working to support transport equity and increase modal choice, as part of the Mobilizing Justice initiative. The goals of the workshops were to:

1. Improve our understanding of experiences of Canadians facing transport poverty and the current on-the-ground priorities, gaps, and community initiatives developed in response.
2. Build two-way communication between community organizations and Mobilizing Justice researchers and partners.
3. Provide value to participating community organizations and leaders.

The workshops were held on Fridays from 12:00pm EST – 1:30pm EST. The workshop dates were:

- March 22
- May 10
- July 19
- September 20
- November 29

Invitations to participate were sent to 293 community organizations identified in the [Catalogue of Canadian Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty](#). 491 participants, representing community organizations, NGOs, research and academic institutions, governments and public transit agencies, and Mobilizing Justice partners registered to attend across the five workshops.

Held virtually over Zoom, each workshop featured presentations from Mobilizing Justice partners, Community of Practice organizations, or transportation practitioners. Workshops were organized around a key theme and topic, and featured some combination of large group discussions, formal

presentations, smaller breakout sessions, interactive polls, and panel discussions.

WORKSHOP #1 – CASE STUDIES FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY (MARCH 22)

The first workshop of 2024 shared findings from Team INTERACT’s report “Practices and Inspiration for Sustainable Transportation Equity: Case Studies from Canadian Cities”. INTERACT is a pan-Canadian collaboration of scientists, city builders, community partners, and residents studying the design of healthy cities. Developed in collaboration with LevelUp Planning and transportation and equity professionals from across Canada, the report assembles practical guidance on ways cities can embed equity in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of transportation interventions. Mobilizing Justice Theme 2 co-lead Dr. Meghan Winters was a principal investigator on the report, and shared key highlights from the study, including considerations municipal practitioners should remember when developing equity policies, and promising practices for embedding equity in sustainable transportation initiatives.

Promising practices for embedding equity in sustainable transportation interventions

Grounded in the lessons from our case studies and broader dialogue with transportation practitioners, we uncovered 15 promising practices for embedding equity in different aspects of sustainable transportation interventions, from policy and planning through to implementation and evaluation:



POLICY AND STRATEGY

ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

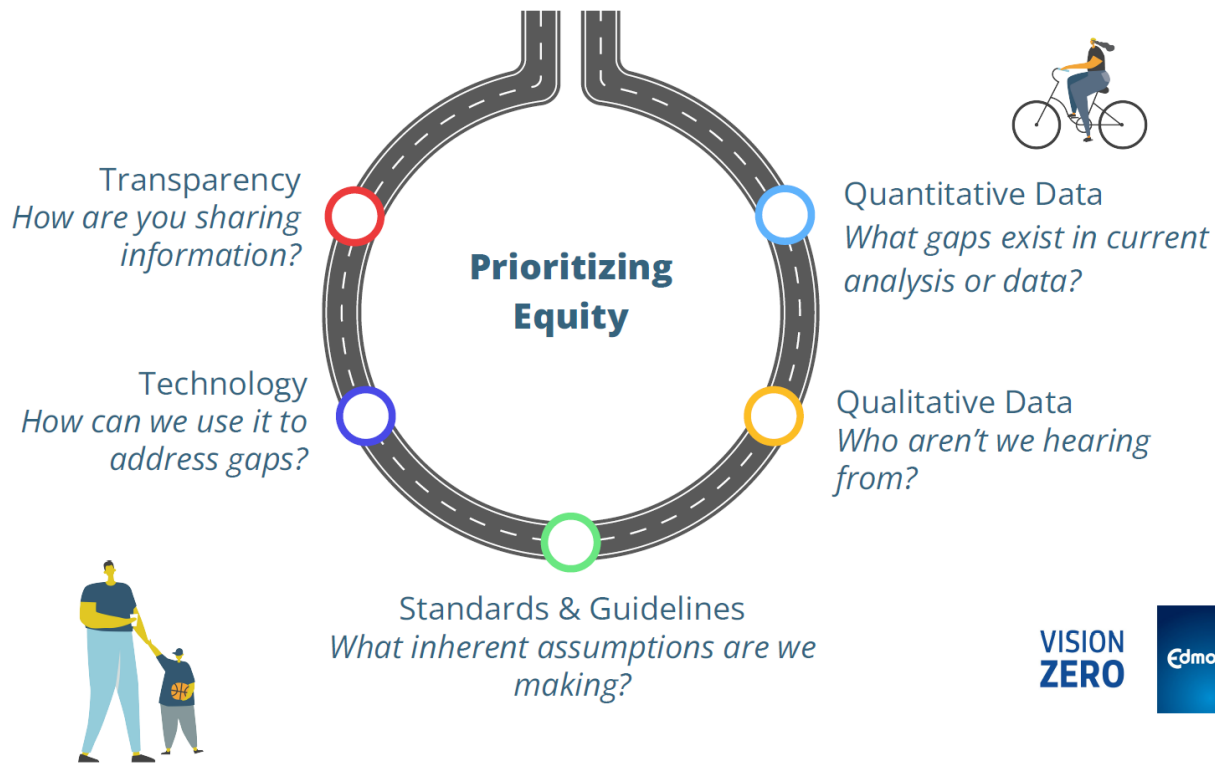
ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION

PRIORITIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

LEARNING AND EVALUATION

15 practices any city should follow when embedding equity in transportation initiatives. Graph from *Practices and inspiration for sustainable transportation equity: Case studies from Canadian cities. Interventions, Equity, Research, and Action in Cities Team. 2023.*

Following Meghan’s overview of the report, Brittany Traynor, Manager of Community Development for the County of Kings, NS and Dr. Shewkar Ibrahim, Director of Traffic Operations, Edmonton, AB, delved into the nuts and bolts of developing municipal strategies and plans in an equitable manner. Brittany shared her work developing a Strategy for Belonging in County of Kings. The strategy created a roadmap for change and for redressing systemic discrimination and marginalization of historically excluded communities. Brittany stressed the need to first build community trust before taking action, which begins with truth, with acknowledging past harms and reasons why marginalized communities may not have much faith in governments and institutions. “There is a reason truth comes before reconciliation,” she reminded members. In the search for truth, she advised against relying solely on Statistics Canada for data, as their system has major gaps in the types of information they gather, and how it is disaggregated (as Statistics Canada themselves acknowledge).



The City of Edmonton’s Transportation Department asked hard questions of themselves as they sought to incorporate equity into their road safety plans. Graph from City of Edmonton’s Safe Mobility Strategy 2021-2025.

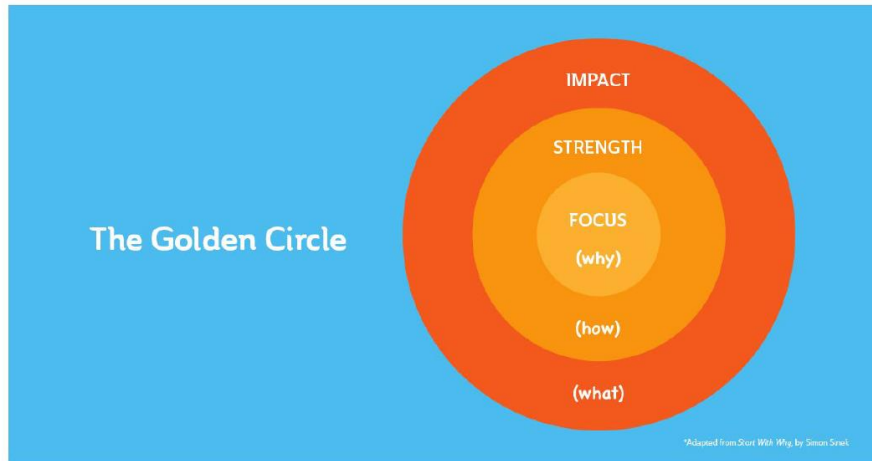
Shewkar shared Edmonton’s approach to applying an equity lens to their Vision Zero and safe mobility strategy. This begins with challenging what Edmonton’s transportation staff know, and more importantly, what they don’t know. Shewkar noted how existing transportation data is filled with assumptions, lived experience gaps, and misalignments between ideal desired outcomes and how processes actually work in practice. For example, Shewkar pointed out that as an engineer, she is supposed to adhere to established guidelines and practices, even when those standards have not kept

up to date with current knowledge and research. Many transportation guidelines were developed without investigating the inherent biases those in charge of creating them brought to the work.

Community of Practice members asked questions about where to begin when implementing equity-based policies and plans. Both Shewkar and Brittany made it clear that neither city has solved all their problems or even come close to completing their journeys. They emphasized that starting meaningful equity work is often the hardest part, and once the journey is begun and trust is built, centering equity becomes less daunting and opaque.

WORKSHOP #2 – COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES & STORYTELLING IN TRANSPORT EQUITY (MAY 10)

The second workshop featured a world café style exploration on how practitioners utilize storytelling as an advocacy tool, tell stories through numbers, and hone narratives through data visualization. The panel was made up of experienced communicators Christine Brouzes, co-founder of Ikwe Safe Rides, Ben Hammer, Transportation Officer with Ecology Action Centre, and Kate Fane, Communications Specialist with Evenings & Weekends Consulting. Christine discussed the importance of crafting a narrative with data, using emotions and imagery to bring the data alive. She feels that when it comes to marrying storytelling and data, an effective strategy is to begin with a few key data points as a foundation and then dive into the narrative. Most listeners aren't going to remember too many facts and figures, so Christine recommended making sure the ones you do use are the most important. Ben shared his experience making Active Transportation Plans in Nova Scotia more accessible to the general population by creating a simple mapping tool that visualized the dense technical plans. He approached this big, unwieldy task by narrowing down his scope to a few basic questions most people want answered when looking for plans of this nature: 1) Does my community have a plan? 2) What is proposed in my community? 3) What projects are currently in progress? 4) What projects have been completed? When designing a data visualization tool for the public, Ben emphasized the need to frame questions, answers, and search parameters with language accessible to the average person.



The Golden Circle approach to storytelling that centres telling why we do something as the key component of an effective narrative. Graph adapted from Start With Why from Simon Sinek.

Kate talked about approaches to answering the question of: “What do you or your organization do?” She explored the qualities of a great “Why Story,” i.e., why we are doing the work we do. Kate identified four key aspects of a strong “Why Story”: 1) spoken from the heart in simple language, 2) puts the people impacted by the work at the centre, 3) active storytelling, and 4) grounded in emotion or value. All three speakers touched on the need for effective communication to have characters listeners can relate to the message through, emotional hooks, and to be grounded in values and vision. Many Community of Practice members expressed that communications work can be easy to overlook and hard to resource given the pressures of program delivery and policy implementation. This workshop provided useful tools for getting members more comfortable utilizing storytelling and lived experiences as tools for advocacy and knowledge mobilization.

WORKSHOP #3 – SUPPLY SIDE EQUITY FOR RIDESHARE DRIVERS (JULY 19)

The third workshop featured a panel discussion on how rideshare companies such as Uber and Lyft have created inequitable conditions on the supply side for their drivers, and how that impacts transport poverty for everyone else. The panel was moderated by Tom Slee, board member for RideFair, and featured Dr. James Parrott, Director of Economic and Fiscal Policies at the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, Dr. Aliaa Alagar, Assistant Professor, Industrial Engineering, Department of Mechanical, Industrial, and Mechatronics Engineering, Toronto Metropolitan University Denise Moffatt, Director of Government Relations and Political Action, BC Federation of Labour and Earla Phillips, Vice

President, Rideshare Drivers Association of Ontario. The discussion touched on several issues, including unfair labour practices and their impacts on the health and wellbeing of drivers, how those unfair practices contribute to congestion and exacerbate transport poverty in Canada, and the role of local governments in regulating rideshare companies.

24% response on survey sent to 8,000 drivers

- Drivers tend to be middle-aged, immigrant men, largely from Africa, who do not have education beyond a high school degree
- Typical driver drives full-time or near full-time to provide their sole or primary source of income
- 90% of drivers own their own vehicle and nearly 60% purchased vehicle for the sole purpose of being a TNC driver
- Drivers often reject ride requests because it wouldn't provide sufficient earnings to make it worthwhile
 - 23% reject 20% or more of trip offers
 - Another 28% reject offers 5-20% of the time

June 2024

Parrott, Reich, Yang Minnesota TNC driver compensation

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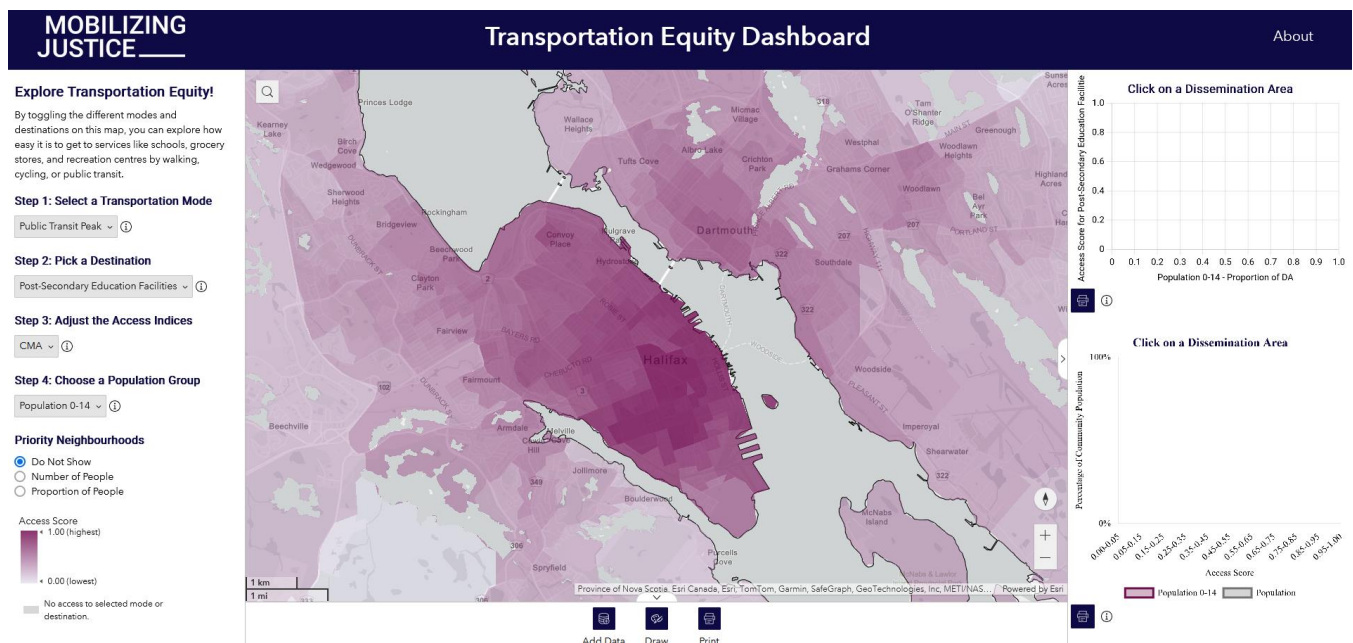
A study of rideshare drivers in Minnesota found, amongst other things, that most drive full time as their sole source of income, refuting claims from rideshare companies that their drivers are part time contractors. Graph from Parrott, Reich, Yang Minnesota TNC driver compensation.

James highlighted some of the misleading claims rideshare companies have made about driver earnings. For example, Uber claims that the median earning for drivers in Toronto are \$33.35 an hour. However, this number does not include the costs to drivers for things like gas and insurance, nor does it incorporate the unpaid time spent driving around waiting for a new fare. If those costs are considered, the median income is closer to \$11.62 an hour, well below minimum wage. Aliaa shared her research looking at the demographics of rideshare drivers. She has found that drivers are often newcomers, racialized, male, and lower income. For many, driving for these companies is a low-barrier entry to the workforce in their new community. Building on this, Denise highlight that these workers are legally, independent contractors, and as such, rideshare companies are under no obligation to provide benefits, sick days, or health and safety standards. Earla talked about the efforts some municipalities have taken to limit the number of drivers on the road, as rideshare drivers circling for fares contributes to traffic congestion. Rideshare companies have fought these efforts tooth and nail, as the companies benefit from large numbers of drivers on their apps and on the road. Companies have largely been successful at fighting efforts to cap driver numbers by suggesting that users will need to wait longer for their rides, while dodging accusations related to congestion.

Community of Practice members discussed the need to bring these supply side equity issues into conversations on the demand side. They noted that transportation practitioners and labour rights advocates do not often coordinate efforts on policy development and advocacy, despite overlapping interests, values, and desired outcomes.

WORKSHOP #4 – OPERATIONALIZING TRANSPORTATION EQUITY DATA (SEPTEMBER 20)

September’s workshop introduced the [Mobilizing Justice Hub](#) and the [Transportation Equity Dashboard](#) to the Community of Practice. Mobilizing Justice Knowledge Mobilization Lead Jaimy Fischer walked members through the tools, which include a free web mapping application that helps users identify sustainable transportation inequities in Canadian cities. This user-friendly tool is designed for residents, communities, advocates, planners, policy and decision-makers, researchers, and more. Jaimy provided an overview and interactive demonstration of the dashboard and its features, along with insights and inspiration gained through partnered engagement, analysis, and use cases of the dashboard and its data. They illustrated how the hub has been utilized by practitioners in the City of Vancouver to understand disparities in who has access to all ages and abilities friendly bike infrastructure, in the City of Toronto to prioritize short term road safety projects, and by the United Way to measure community wellness.



The Mobilizing Justice Transportation Equity Dashboard

Jaimy’s presentation sparked conversation amongst Community of Practice members about how to utilize this hub. After the session, 88% of participants indicated they intend to use the hub moving forward. When asked why they intend to use the data, responses focused on its utility for incorporating

equity into transit project business cases and municipal plans with explicit equity goals. The school specific data was mentioned several times as a data set with strong applications for members. When asked if any barriers exist preventing the hub from being more useful, feedback centred on the data still being very geared towards academics and researchers. Members felt they would need to translate the data further to make it accessible to the public or elected officials. That being said, members appreciated the hub as a common platform that practitioners from across the country can draw upon.

WORKSHOP #5 – JUSTICE AND BELONGING IN TRANSPORTATION SPACES (NOVEMBER 29)

The fifth and final workshop of 2024 featured a world café discussion led by two speakers with a background in both community organization and local government who shared their approaches to incorporating social equity into transportation planning, cultivating belonging in cities, and engaging youth in city building. The panel was made up of Brittany Traynor, Manager of Community Development for the County of Kings, NS and Ryan Lo, Co-founder and Co-Executive Director of Urban Minds, a non-profit that creates meaningful ways for youth to shape equitable and sustainable cities. Brittany talked about the large diaspora population in Nova Scotia, the largest in Canada outside of the Greater Toronto Area. As a result, County of Kings has over the last ten years worked to expand their approaches to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) so that they were tools to achieve justice and belonging, rather than the end goals themselves. As part of that work, they have developed an Active and Safe Routes to School strategy that prioritizes the creation of new sidewalks in marginalized communities, tying that work to reparations as part of Truth and Reconciliation. This entailed a mindset change, where transportation infrastructure is no longer just about mobility or recreation, but is a part of a larger justice-based system. Brittany cautioned against complacency in building justice and belonging, particularly when it comes to building trust. For marginalized communities, it can be a scary thing to talk to government. Engagement staff should see their roles as advocating for communities to their colleagues and elected officials, because marginalized communities often don't have the resources to do this.



Youth are often targets for exclusion in public spaces. Images from *Justice and Belonging for Youth: The Importance of Youth Engagement in Transportation Spaces*.

Ryan shared his work in engaging youth in city building and transportation conversations. He pointed out that traditional consultation methods make it very difficult for youth to participate, and as a result, attendance skews far older than the general population. Youth make up between a quarter and a third of Canada's population, and their voices are almost entirely absent from city building processes. When it comes to engaging youth, Ryan emphasized the need for active engagement opportunities, such as walk audits and community bike rides. When taking the time to ask and listen to youth, their insights and perspectives often surprise adults and reveal blind spots in policies and plans. He also highlighted the unique challenges faced by newcomer youth, and second generation children of immigrant parents. Each group faces challenges to accessing mobility and public space that are unique from their parents and from each other. For example, as part of a project on Toronto Bike Share, engaging youth Muslim women on cultural taboos around cycling helped to improve understanding of the barriers Bike Share faces in becoming a viable transportation option for this community.

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2024 COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Throughout the five 2024 Community of Practice workshops, some recurring themes for future exploration arose from participants. The following are some of the most frequently identified areas members would like to dive deeper into, reflecting barriers they face in bringing more equity into their work and professional environments.

Research and Data

1. **Accessibility Poverty Research** – Several Community of Practice sessions this year and in prior years touched on the intersections of accessibility, poverty and transport inequality from a lived experience perspective. However, there has not been as much exploration of the data linking these connected issues. Community of Practice members would like information on what research existing on transport poverty, accessibility and economic deprivation in Canada.
2. **Transportation Equity and 2SLGBTQIA+ Identity** – While (binary) gender identity and transportation poverty has been a common area of discussion in the Community of Practice, sexual orientation and trans, non-binary, or third gender identities has not been touched on as often. An exploration of transportation poverty with a gender identity and sexuality lens would help identify the unique mobility challenges faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
3. **Data Translation for Elected Officials** – One of the areas of need the 2024 Community of Practice identified was comprehensive data sets that are comparable across cities, regions, and provinces. Members appreciated the [Mobilizing Justice Hub](#) and the [Transportation Equity Dashboard](#), and as a next step, they identified the need to translate the rich data sets into actionable items for elected officials and decision makers.

Implementing Equity

1. **Effective Engagement** – A common theme across all 14 of the Community of Practice sessions held since 2022 is an interest amongst members in learning about different approaches to effectively engaging systematically marginalized communities.
2. **Scoping Equity Processes** – As governments, research projects, and NGOs move towards centring equity in all their work, members expressed a need to learn how to effectively do so when creating RFPs, project plans, and research proposals. Equity being such a broad topic, the Community of Practice is interested in better understanding how to scope equity components of projects in ways that are not performative, and at the same time, are not too broad in scope that meaningful progress is impossible. How can members know when they've done enough to move ahead with a project?
3. **Prioritizing Capital Investments** – Case studies from Edmonton and the County of Kings touched on road safety initiatives that prioritize investments with an equity lens. However, these discussions focused on short to medium term projects. Members would like to explore approaches for centring equity in large and long-term transportation initiatives, such as ten-year capital budgets, and new public transit projects.

Case Studies and Best Practices

1. **Curbing Harassment on Public Transit** – Mobilizing Justice research found that 20% of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in Canada experience racism and harassment on public (Palm, 2022). While transit agencies have implemented a variety of approaches for curbing harassment, Community of Practice members have expressed an interest in learning more about which approaches are working, and how to balance addressing short-term harms with tackling root causes of harassment in transportation spaces.
2. **Rural Transportation Equity** – Another common theme across the last three years of the Community of Practice is a strong desire for case studies that illustrate approaches for increasing transportation equity in rural contexts.
3. **Tools for (Dis)Incentivizing Transport Modes** – Governments use a variety of carrots and sticks to incentivize and disincentivize transportation choice. Members are eager to discuss successful case studies of how mode shifts have been incentivized and disincentivized, and how equity lenses have been incorporated into those efforts.

This third year of the Community of Practice provided a lot for us to consider and reflect upon as we move into the final year. With more data from across the project's various themes and activities, conversations are shifting to how the data can be accessible and applicable to civil servants and

grassroots community organizers who can then act upon the research. We look forward to diving deeper and exploring those important questions over the next year.

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