

MOBILIZING
JUSTICE

Advancing Equity in Transportation: A Practitioner's Guide

September 2026



► What is this Guide?

This guide is intended to help practitioners across a range of disciplines deliver equitable transportation projects. Each section offers guidance about how to promote equity across all phases of project delivery. The content presented in the guide is a resource for practitioners, not a checklist. Readers are encouraged to draw on additional resources to promote equity in transportation planning and practice. The content and examples in the guide provide a Canadian focus but may be useful to practitioners in other contexts for the design and delivery of equitable transportation projects.

► Methodology

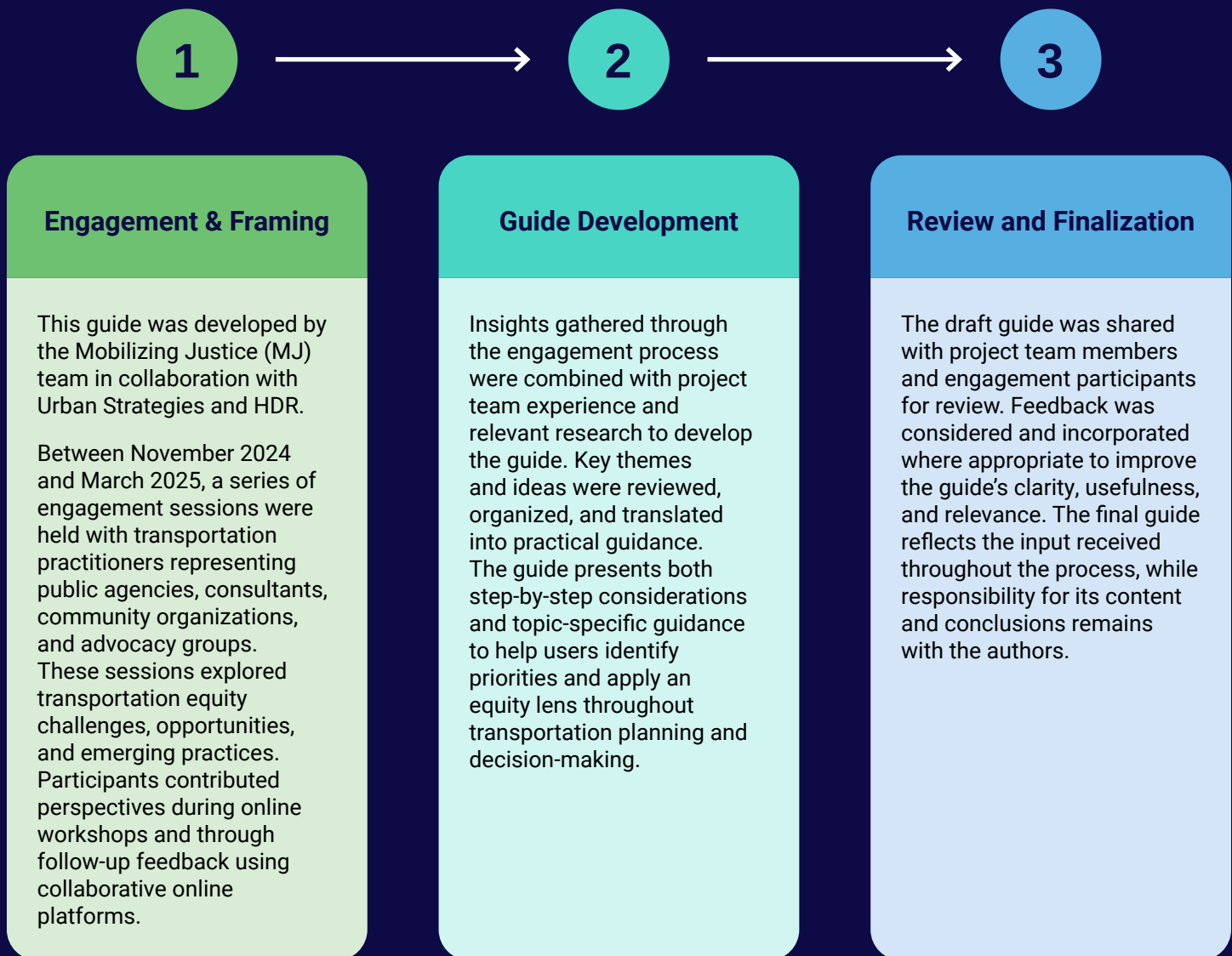


Figure 1: Overview of Methodology



Figure 2: Downtown Vancouver - Intersecting Mobility Networks

► How to use this Guide?

Each section of this guide is designed to be referenced as a standalone resource. Readers are encouraged to refer to the sections that address any questions they have or challenges they are experiencing in the design and delivery of equitable transportation projects. The content in each section is summarized below:

Section 1:

Describes why equity is important in transportation planning, decision-making, and project delivery.

Section 2:

Identifies common challenges and barriers to achieving equitable transportation outcomes. It includes a case study that demonstrates practical approaches for addressing these challenges.

Section 3:

Outlines key considerations at each stage of the transportation project lifecycle to help improve equity outcomes.

Section 4:

Provides guidance, recommendations, and examples for designing and delivering engagement processes that are inclusive, accessible, and equitable.

Section 5:

Outlines metrics and indicators to help track progress toward equity goals. These measures can help practitioners understand who benefits from transportation projects, identify potential gaps, and assess outcomes over time.

Glossary:

Provides definitions of key terminology used throughout the guide.

Acknowledgments

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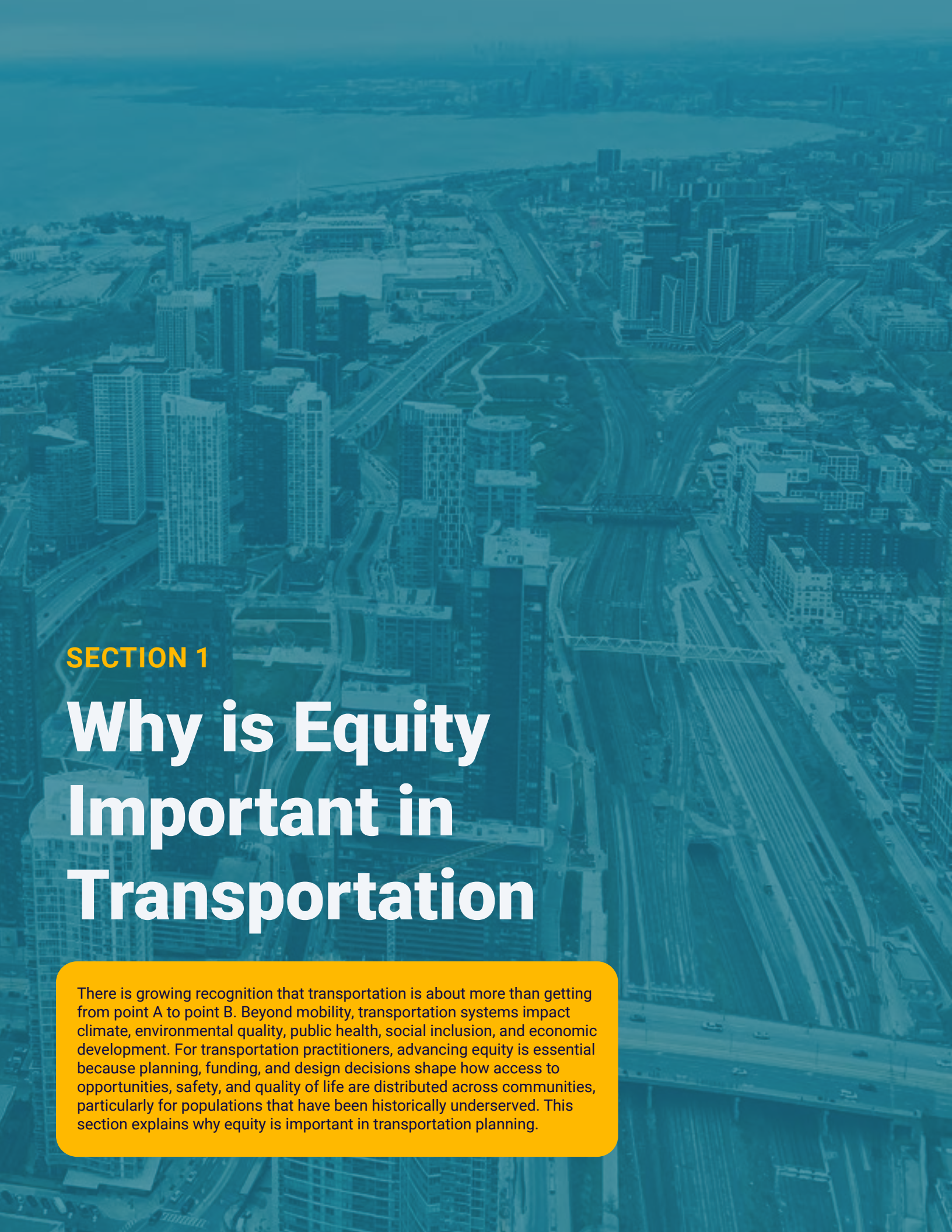
Urban Systems

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Figure 3: BC Transit bus



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Chicago, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous skyscrapers, highways, and a body of water in the background. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay.

SECTION 1

Why is Equity Important in Transportation

There is growing recognition that transportation is about more than getting from point A to point B. Beyond mobility, transportation systems impact climate, environmental quality, public health, social inclusion, and economic development. For transportation practitioners, advancing equity is essential because planning, funding, and design decisions shape how access to opportunities, safety, and quality of life are distributed across communities, particularly for populations that have been historically underserved. This section explains why equity is important in transportation planning.

Equity in Transportation Planning and Practice

Equity in transportation planning focuses on how the benefits and burdens of mobility are distributed across neighbourhoods, modes, and members of society. Practitioners are urged to consider whose needs and voices are reflected in transportation planning and project delivery.

Traditional transportation planning emphasizes efficiency, often measured through standard metrics such as vehicle throughput and level of service. These benchmarks focus on moving motor vehicles quickly and efficiently, producing built environments that privilege driving while limiting options for those who do not have reliable access to a personal vehicle.

Inequities also arise from how transportation systems have been developed and invested in over time, from planning decisions that concentrate benefits in some neighbourhoods while shifting costs to others.

Delivering equitable transportation projects requires a different approach. Unlike equality, which treats everyone the same, **equity recognizes that how people move is shaped by different social, economic, cultural, and geographic circumstances, resulting in different resources, needs, and barriers across population groups.**

Equitable transportation planning and practice seeks to achieve a ‘level playing field’ for everyone involved while minimizing disproportionate safety, environmental, and quality-of-life impacts on communities.

Using an equity lens doesn’t mean practitioners can fix every underlying barrier, but it does help them make more informed choices that could lead to fairer outcomes. Equity is ever-changing, requiring ongoing attention to changing contexts, needs, and power dynamics.

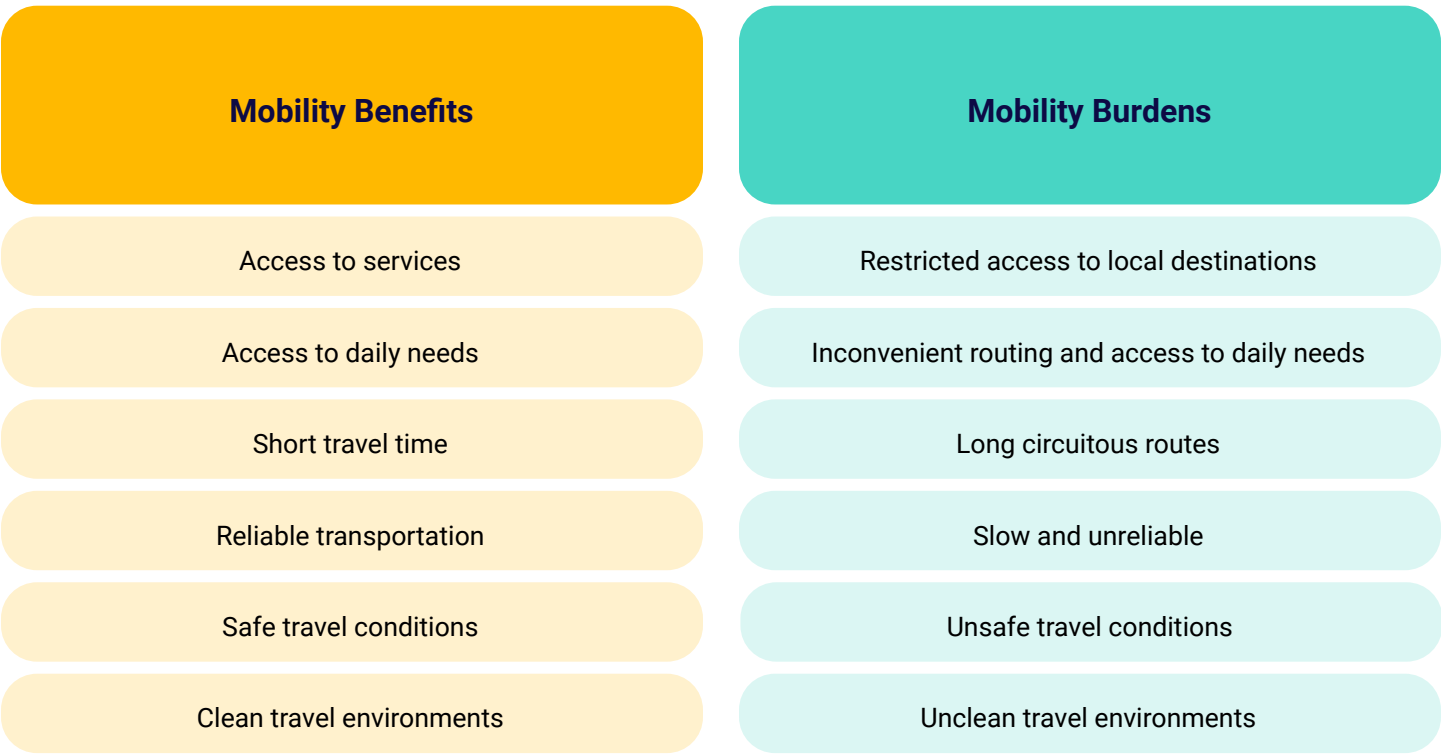


Figure 4: Mobility Benefits and Burdens

 For more information, see Section 5 that provides guidance on how to measure Transport Equity and Transport Poverty

Equity in Transportation Planning and Practice

In transportation planning and practice, equity is conceptualized using a variety of interrelated but relevant dimensions.

Distributional Equity	▶ Relates to how transportation system goods and bads (amenities and disamenities, benefits and harms/burdens/costs) are distributed across communities ▶ Considers who has access to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation options/infrastructure, and who is more exposed to burdens such as pollution or traffic risk
Recognitional Equity	▶ Relates to diverse histories and to the social/geographic circumstances that shape how people move and experience transportation systems ▶ Involves seeing and naming the underlying social and economic structures that contribute to distributional inequities ▶ Involves recognizing how histories and circumstances influence mobility needs and the distribution of mobility burdens and benefits. ▶ Requires acknowledging and including diverse experiences, knowledge systems, and data, especially those that have been stigmatized, marginalized, or excluded in planning and practice
Restorative / Reparative Equity	▶ Relates to responding to harms and injustices produced by past and ongoing transportation and planning decisions ▶ Seeks to prevent the recurrence of injustice by transforming governance processes, decision-making practices, and power relations shaping mobility systems ▶ Recognizes that mobility injustices are historically and structurally produced and therefore require actions that address their underlying causes, not only their immediate impacts ▶ Restorative and reparative equity are often used interchangeably ▶ Restorative equity involves repairing damaged relationships, restoring dignity, and rebuilding trust between institutions and communities affected by inequitable mobility systems ▶ Reparative equity requires material, symbolic, and institutional measures that acknowledge responsibility, compensate for harm, and support the self-determination and empowerment of historically marginalized groups
Procedural Equity	▶ Requires changing practices to enable greater fairness in planning and decision-making processes ▶ Considers how communities are engaged, whose voices are heard, and whose are excluded ▶ Involves determining whether processes are inclusive and transparent ▶ Considers how decision-making structures share or shift power in shaping transportation priorities and outcomes
Epistemic Equity	▶ Relates to how knowledge about mobility and transportation is produced, validated, and used in planning and research ▶ Involves recognizing whose knowledge counts, whose experiences are considered legitimate evidence, and whose perspectives are excluded or marginalized ▶ Recognizes diverse ways of knowing, including experiential, community-based, and situated knowledge alongside technical and expert forms of knowledge ▶ Requires creating inclusive processes that enable the co-production of knowledge and the recognition of multiple epistemologies in understanding mobility systems ▶ Seeks to expand what is considered valid data, evidence, and expertise in order to reshape how transportation problems and solutions are defined

Table 1: Approaches to Dimensions of Equity

Sources:

- Meerow, S., Pajouhesh, P., & Miller, T. R. (2019). Social equity in urban resilience planning. *Local Environment*, 24(9), 793–808. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2019.1645103> (www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13549839.2019.1645103)
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Across all aspects of transportation equity, it is important to recognize the structural and systemic conditions that shape how inequities are created and reinforced over time. These include the policies, practices, funding decisions, and institutional processes that influence who benefits from transportation investments and who faces barriers to access, safety, and opportunity.

Achieving transportation equity requires more than individual projects or one-time actions. It requires transportation systems to be planned, funded, operated, and evaluated in ways that consistently reduce inequities in access, safety, affordability, and environmental impacts. This includes considering how benefits and burdens are distributed across different communities and population groups. It also requires addressing power imbalances—situations where some groups have greater influence over decisions than others. This can be done by creating inclusive and meaningful opportunities for participation, involving communities that have historically been underrepresented in decision-making, and, where appropriate, sharing decision-making responsibilities with affected communities.

Because transportation is closely connected to housing, health, education, employment, and social services, advancing equity often requires coordination across multiple sectors. While many jurisdictions are making progress, fully embedding equity into transportation systems remains an ongoing effort that requires continuous learning, evaluation, and improvement.

People and Communities Underserved by Transportation Systems

In Canada, transportation systems often create the greatest burdens for people who do not drive. Many communities are designed primarily for cars, making it more difficult for people who walk, cycle, use mobility devices, or rely on public transit to travel safely and conveniently.

When transportation options are limited and essential destinations are not nearby, people face barriers getting to work, school, healthcare, shops, and other services. These challenges can be especially significant for people with lower incomes, people living with disabilities, and those living in remote or isolated areas, who may have fewer transportation choices and face greater barriers in their daily lives.

A **barrier** usually refers to something that prevents, restricts, or discourages access, participation, or mobility. It is often understood as an obstacle within the transportation system or broader environment. A **burden**, by contrast, refers more to the costs, harms, stresses, or disadvantages that people disproportionately carry as a result of the transportation system.

The groups shown in Figure 5 are examples of people and communities that are often underserved by transportation systems, but they are not exhaustive or fixed. The communities most affected by transportation inequities may vary depending on the local context, project type, policy decision, or project stage.¹

People also have intersecting identities and lived experiences that can shape how they experience transportation barriers and burdens. For example, the experiences of a low-income older adult living in a rural area may differ significantly from those of a newcomer with disabilities living in an urban centre.

Practitioners should avoid treating these groups as homogeneous categories and instead consider how overlapping social, economic, geographic, cultural, and institutional factors shape transportation experiences and outcomes.



¹ Approximately one-third of U.S. residents do not have a driver's license, while in Canada, nearly 20% of commuters travel to work using modes other than a car, truck, or van. (Sources: U.S. Department of Transportation; Statistics Canada)

Figure 5: Graphic illustrating examples of groups underserved by transportation systems

Reconciliation and Transportation

Reconciliation is distinct from equity and is related to Canada's history of colonization and the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism, including the impacts of the federal Indian Residential School (IRS) system. This history is well documented and all Canadians, sectors, and levels of government have a responsibility to respond to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#), the [Calls to Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#), and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

Indigenous Peoples in Canada experience distinct and disproportionate inequities in mobility and access stemming from colonial policies and governance systems, including transportation, land use, and infrastructure decisions. These inequities include:

- ▶ lower levels of investment in infrastructure
- ▶ more safety and health risks from traffic exposure
- ▶ fewer transportation options
- ▶ geographic isolation
- ▶ risk of racism and discrimination based on identity

Transportation inequities compound with systemic issues in education, health, housing, and access to essential services, alongside discrimination, legislated poverty, and growing risks from climate-related disasters. The result is mobility injustices that limit access to daily needs and opportunities and reinforce cycles of social and economic marginalization. These injustices extend beyond transportation itself and contribute to broader harms, including the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people.

This guide does not attempt to address reconciliation. However, advancing equity in transportation systems can contribute to reconciliation goals by improving conditions for Indigenous Peoples and ensuring their needs and perspectives are better reflected in planning and investment.

How Equity is Reflected in Transportation Planning

Equity in transportation can be considered across several interrelated domains. These provide a practical lens for helping to identify who benefits from transportation investments, who may face challenges, and where improvements are needed:

- ▶ **Accessibility** – whether people can reach jobs, education, healthcare, services, and daily needs within a reasonable time and by multiple modes
- ▶ **Affordability** – whether transportation costs are manageable relative to income and whether low-cost options are available
- ▶ **Safety and security** – provision of infrastructure and protection from traffic-related risks, as well as from real or perceived threats of harassment, discrimination, or violence while travelling
- ▶ **Environmental exposure** – whether people are disproportionately exposed to burdens such as air pollution, noise, and community severance
- ▶ **Service and infrastructure provision** – whether public infrastructure and transportation services are equitably distributed and maintained across communities
- ▶ **Participation** – whether planning processes are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to diverse needs

Figure 6: West 4th Avenue - Vancouver



Benefits of Equity

Equity in transportation leads to better projects by improving outcomes for both communities and the organizations that deliver them.



For Communities

More equitable transportation systems can:

- ▶ Expand access to jobs, education, healthcare, cultural spaces, and opportunities for social inclusion and connection
- ▶ Reduce exposure to risks such as traffic collisions, pollution, and noise
- ▶ Strengthen local economies and reduce long-term costs by improving public health and increasing productivity among traditionally excluded populations
- ▶ Increase affordability and reduce the financial burden of travel
- ▶ Support healthier, more inclusive, resilient, and socially connected neighbourhoods

For Organizations

Delivering equitable transportation planning processes can:

- ▶ Improve investment decisions by showing where benefits are most equitably and broadly distributed, avoiding projects that deliver narrow or uneven returns
- ▶ Strengthen project evaluation by quantifying accessibility gains, travel time savings, and induced demand across different groups and communities
- ▶ Identify potential long-term risks such as displacement, gentrification, or income polarization that can erode benefits and undermine the goals of infrastructure investment
- ▶ Build public trust through transparent processes and visible improvements in underserved communities
- ▶ Support alignment with climate, health, housing, and economic development goals
- ▶ Demonstrate accountability to federal, provincial, and municipal policy commitments that increasingly prioritize equity and sustainability

SECTION 2

Transportation Equity Requires Sustained Efforts

There are significant and ongoing barriers to incorporating equity into transportation projects. The insights presented in this section are drawn from real-world experience and help explain why equity goals do not always lead to meaningful changes in project outcomes despite being increasingly recognized.



Challenges and Barriers to Embedding Equity in Practice

There are significant and ongoing barriers to advancing equity in transportation practice. Engagement sessions with transportation professionals across Canada revealed a shared understanding of these challenges. Their insights reflect real-world experience and help explain why equity goals, while increasingly recognized, do not always lead to meaningful outcomes.

Many of these barriers cannot be addressed through individual projects alone. Instead, they require sustained efforts to change the policies, processes, and institutional practices that contribute to inequitable outcomes.

Table 2 summarizes the key barriers that transportation professionals face in the Canadian context. The case study on page 10 presents a practical example from the City of Toronto’s Transportation Equity Policy Framework, which addresses some of the organizational, cultural, data, and measurement barriers shown in Table 2.

Type of Barrier	Examples
Institutional	▶ Financial and institutional support for delivering equity goals may be absent or insufficient ▶ Procurement systems and project scoping processes that exclude participation from equity-denied groups
Organizational and Culture	▶ Lack of awareness and understanding among staff around what equity entails and why it matters ▶ Engagement with marginalized communities is minimal or symbolic rather than substantive and ongoing ▶ Equity work is undertaken as a separate initiative rather than embedded in the full project life cycle ▶ Misalignment with equity-driven recommendations from staff and elected leadership
Procedural	▶ Project development processes that are inflexible with limited room for adaptation as community needs evolve or as equity issues are identified ▶ Unrealistic project timelines and budgets ▶ Prioritization of technical information over lived experience ▶ Equity is introduced too late in the planning process instead of shaping project priorities and guiding design decisions from the outset
Data and Measurement	▶ Lack of neighbourhood-level, or demographic-specific transportation data, which inhibits the ability to identify systemic disparities or to track the outcomes of intervention ▶ Existing datasets that fail to capture the lived experiences of those most affected by transportation inequities ▶ Lack of appropriate methodologies and metrics to measure transportation equity

Table 2: Types of barriers to embedding equity in practice

Case Study

For years, various groups across City of Toronto's divisions and agencies, including the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), have been experimenting with data, tools, and metrics to incorporate equity analysis into transportation decision-making, with approaches and methods becoming more sophisticated over time.

All agreed that equity was important, but questions remained around how to operationalize it in the absence of established best practices or standards, how to weigh it alongside other transportation priorities, and how to translate equity-driven scoring framework into measurable policy goals and performance targets.

In 2024, the Transportation Equity Policy Framework (TEPF) project was initiated to develop common definitions of transportation equity as an outcome and a process, identify priority population groups and their barriers, produce common qualitative and geospatial tools for project and program prioritization or evaluation, and have a common set of guiding principles and policy goals for advancing transportation equity.

Phase 1: The City's Divisions of Transportation Services, City Planning, and Social Development, in collaboration with the TTC, jointly developed a conceptual framework, which identifies:

- ▶ Transportation benefits and burdens
- ▶ Priority populations
- ▶ Barriers to transportation
- ▶ How different groups are impacted
- ▶ Time thresholds that can inform future targets for multi-modal access to opportunities
- ▶ Definitions of transportation equity as an outcome and process
- ▶ Guiding principles for advancing transportation equity
- ▶ Policy goals that outline the desired outcomes in achieving a more equitable transportation system

Phase 2: The next phase of work focused on the development of a suite of qualitative and quantitative analytical tools for prioritization and evaluation of a range of transportation projects, as well as a baselining analysis to gather evidence on the current state of equity in Toronto's system and inform future performance-based planning and targets.

- ▶ The refined Transportation Equity Opportunity Zones

(TEOZ) Index, now called the Transportation Equity Index, is being finalized and socialized with staff across teams with guidance on application to their particular project/program.

- ▶ A Walking Access Dashboard and Cycling Access Dashboard, were recently launched, which enable staff to conduct City-wide and localized analysis.
- ▶ A Transportation Equity Baselining Report is being completed on access to transportation, multi-modal access to opportunities, affordability, accessibility, climate vulnerability, and traffic safety risk conditions across the City's geographies and priority populations.
- ▶ Assessment questionnaires were developed for early consideration of equity impacts for a number of broad categories of projects (Secondary Plans, Network Planning, Street Amenities Allocation).

The proposed Phase Three, "Target Setting and Progress Monitoring", will leverage efforts to date on building consensus and conceptual clarity, in order to set transportation equity performance targets that can enable more equitable decision-making for transportation within City of Toronto. This phase of the project will complete the shift to a performance lens, making progress measurable, which is crucial to sustainable and resilient transportation equity efforts.

To date, the framework and its tools have been applied to the Cycling Network Plan Near-Term Program, the Geometric Safety Improvements program, the Traffic Calming program, Neighbourhood Streets Plan, School Crossing Guards operations among others. Efforts are also underway to support the new Street Furniture agreement, the Strategic Truck Network, and the Pedestrian Streets Policy.

Lessons learned shared by City of Toronto Lorina Hoxha, Senior PM who leads the TEPF project:

- ▶ "Transportation equity is a complex and evolving field of research and practice; successful implementation requires a strong conceptual basis and the development of strategies tailored to project aims."
- ▶ "Equity-based policy goals cannot be data-driven all the way down - they are ultimately reflections of a City's vision of a just transportation system."
- ▶ "There is no final 'right' method - only strong arguments with clearly articulated stakes and limitations."

SECTION 3

Advancing Equity Across a Project Lifecycle

This guide uses a project lifecycle approach to explore how equity can be incorporated into transportation policy, planning, and project delivery.

Transportation investments and policies typically move through a series of stages, including problem identification, project initiation, assessment and selection, planning, design, procurement, implementation, operation, monitoring, and evaluation. Rather than viewing these stages as separate activities, the lifecycle approach recognizes them as part of a connected process in which decisions made at one stage influence what happens next.

This section outlines the lifecycle approach and highlights opportunities to advance equity at each stage of a project.



Advancing Equity Across a Project Lifecycle

Every stage of a project provides an opportunity to consider and advance equity. Decisions made at one stage influence the choices and outcomes that follow, making it important to consider equity throughout the entire project lifecycle. For example, early decisions about project scope, funding, or the location of a transit route can have a lasting impact on who benefits from a transportation investment and who may be negatively impacted.

Regular review points throughout project development can help practitioners assess progress, identify emerging issues, and make adjustments where needed to support equitable outcomes.

Project Scoping Tips

Achieving equitable transportation outcomes often requires new ways of thinking and working. However, requests for proposals (RFPs) and other procurement documents can sometimes limit opportunities to incorporate equity considerations, even when this is not the intention.

How can project definitions, procurement requirements, and evaluation criteria be designed to support equitable transportation outcomes from the outset?

- ▶ **Personnel:** Require skills and experience that demonstrate an understanding of equity in theory and practice within the project team. Consideration can be given to including an equity specialist role on the team.
- ▶ **Scope:** Rather than be prescriptive, focus on the equity goals and outcomes of your project and let the bidders propose analytical methodologies and engagement strategies to meet them. Clarify whether the proponent can recommend complementary tasks to the scope defined by the client.
- ▶ **Work Plan:** Include a task dedicated to defining an equity lens or framework for your project, and embed it early in your work plan, as it will guide the rest of your project and process. Consider requiring the equity framework as part of the project management plan or engagement plan as applicable.
- ▶ **Procurement/Budget:** Allow for flexibility – equity methodologies and data are evolving, and equitable frameworks and solutions are developed in collaboration with communities and interest-holders. Where possible, establish a contingency budget and give bidders an opportunity to recommend additional/optional tasks that can be procured within that budget.

Lifecycle Stages

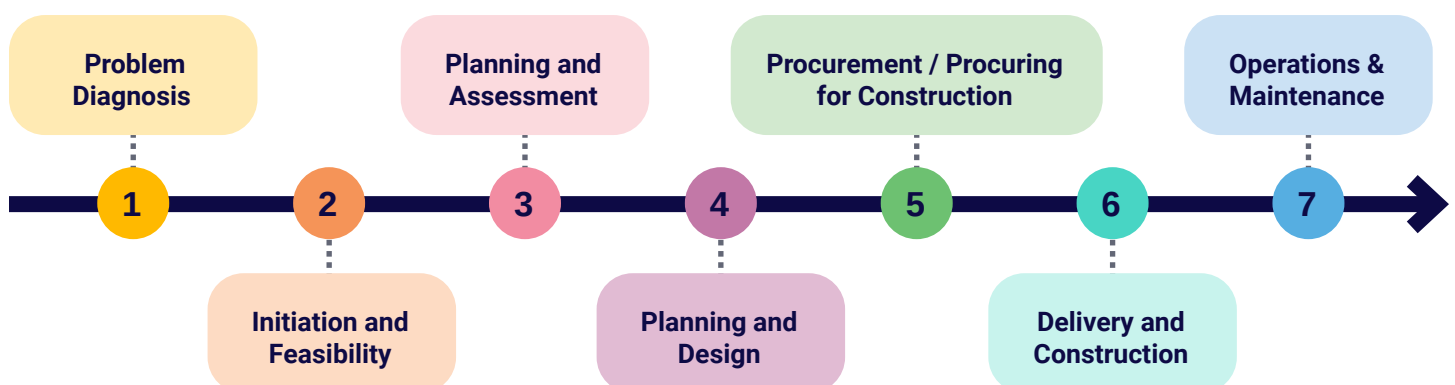


Figure 7: Transportation project lifecycle stages

Details of the Lifecycle Stages

1. Problem Diagnosis

Stage Focus	▶ Define a transportation problem or need, set priorities, and establish preliminary goals through government and community input
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Problem definition should reflect needs identified by communities experiencing barriers or inequities in mobility or access, as defined by local context ▶ Outline opportunities to advance equity in addressing the identified transportation problem ▶ Draw on both technical data and lived-experience data to reduce bias in how problems are characterized
Barriers Addressed	▶ Equity introduced late in the process ▶ Structural and institutional misalignment between planning processes and community-identified needs ▶ Limited access to disaggregated or experiential data which can constrain how inequities are recognized
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Make use of existing data and studies related to impacted communities ▶ Establish an equity advisory board ▶ Conduct a community needs assessment by engaging with community members and local leaders and issuing a survey ▶ Map current conditions and current/future needs of target areas

2. Initiation and Feasibility

Stage Focus	▶ Determine feasibility, scope, interest-holders, and preliminary funding priorities
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Recognize equity outcomes as a core project objective from the outset ▶ Incorporate intended equity outcomes in feasibility assessment(s) ▶ Establish preliminary equity measures or indicators ▶ Ensure Scoping and Visioning align outcomes with community priorities to guide subsequent decisions
Barriers Addressed	▶ Weak or lacking regulatory/legal equity requirements ▶ Institutional and procedural misalignment between initiation processes and community needs. Procurement and scoping frameworks that limit equity inclusion or flexibility. ▶ Absence of mechanisms to translate community priorities and equity objectives into project scope or success criteria ▶ Misalignment between transportation, economic, environmental, and equity objectives
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Integrate equity into the project charter, including specific, measurable, and time-bound equity objectives ▶ Assess equity goals alongside other evaluation criteria ▶ Draft a benefit & risk register that explicitly lists distributional effects and proposed mitigations

3. Planning and Assessment

Stage Focus	▶ Identify and evaluate project alternatives through formal review and approval processes
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Consider/evaluate how benefits and burdens are distributed ▶ Assess technical, qualitative, and lived-experience data to ensure results capture diverse realities ▶ Document trade-offs and be transparent about how and why decisions are made
Barriers Addressed	▶ Over reliance on technical and quantitative data that excludes lived experience ▶ Limited flexibility in evaluation frameworks to incorporate equity criteria ▶ Political and budgetary pressures prioritizing cost-efficiency over fairness and inclusion ▶ Weak mechanisms for transparent comparison of social and distributional impacts
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Ensure that the alternatives being evaluated align with the equity considerations identified in previous stages ▶ Use scenario planning and visioning tools that allow communities to explore how different alternatives might affect their daily lives ▶ Conduct an equity impact assessment for each of the proposed alternatives ▶ Apply equity-weighted evaluation criteria that give explicit consideration to how benefits and burdens are distributed across population groups and geographic areas ▶ Incorporate lived-experience data into assessment processes ▶ Engage with community/community advisory board in making final selection

4. Planning and Design

Stage Focus	▶ Refine preferred design, complete technical analyses, and engage affected interest-holders
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Ensure design decisions reflect equity objectives set in prior stages ▶ Ensure planning and design processes account for and prioritize how layout, connectivity, accessibility, and safety features affect communities experiencing barriers or inequities in mobility or access
Barriers Addressed	▶ Organizational culture that silos equity ▶ Engagement processes that are symbolic or tokenistic rather than substantive ▶ Limited adaptability in procedures and timelines to integrate community input and equity considerations
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Apply universal and inclusive design standards ▶ Use participatory design processes such as design charrettes, walking audits, or co-design workshops that engage community members in shaping specific design elements ▶ Translate feedback from engagement into design refinements

 Refer to Section 4 'Good Practices in Equitable Engagement'

5. Procurement / Procuring for Construction

Stage Focus	▶ Approve and finance the project through regulatory, funding, and contractual decisions
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Procurement processes should align with established equity objectives and create opportunities for diverse participation in project delivery ▶ Contracting frameworks should value social and community outcomes alongside cost, enabling involvement of smaller, community-based, or equity-oriented organizations
Barriers Addressed	▶ Procurement systems that prioritize lowest-cost bids and favour large or established firms ▶ Limited mechanisms for incorporating social or equity criteria in procurement decisions ▶ Exclusion of local or community-based organizations from participation
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Clearly communicate how equity criteria factor into procurement decisions ▶ Incorporate social equity criteria and implement community workforce agreements into procurement scoring ▶ Assign scores for proposal elements such as local hiring targets, workforce diversity plans, community engagement approaches, and partnerships with community-based organizations ▶ Move away from 'lowest cost bid' models and use a 'best value' or 'social value' framework ▶ Break large contracts into smaller components to create space for community-based firms to participate ▶ Include community representatives on proposal selection committees

6. Delivery and Construction

Stage Focus	▶ Deliver construction and early works under agency oversight, ensuring safety and quality before opening
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Maintain and monitor the equity commitments throughout project implementation ▶ Consider how construction activities, timelines, and design adjustments affect communities experiencing barriers or inequities in mobility or access ▶ Ensure that project execution reflects equity objectives related to safety, access, employment, and community impact ▶ Ensure communication with affected communities remains transparent and responsive
Barriers Addressed	▶ Cost and time pressures overriding equity goals ▶ Disconnects between planning intent and on-the-ground delivery ▶ Limited monitoring and accountability mechanisms to track equity commitments during implementation ▶ Inadequate communication with affected communities
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Develop construction impact mitigation plans that address how construction activities affect local residents and businesses ▶ Establish real-time community communication systems such as multilingual construction updates, community liaison positions, and grievance mechanisms for addressing issues ▶ Ensure accessible detours guaranteeing that all temporary pedestrian, cycling, or transit detours are safe, clearly communicated before implementation, and fully accessible to people with disabilities ▶ Conduct mid-implementation reviews that assess whether construction execution aligns with distributional justice principles and equity objectives and make design or process adjustments

7. Operations & Maintenance

Stage Focus	▶ Manage and maintain transportation assets or services
Key Equity Considerations	▶ Operational practices should sustain equity objectives established during planning and design ▶ Service delivery should consider accessibility, affordability, reliability, and safety for communities experiencing barriers or inequities in mobility or access ▶ Ongoing management should ensure resources and maintenance are distributed fairly and responsive to community needs ▶ Measure whether benefits and burdens are equitably distributed over time ▶ Include both quantitative and qualitative indicators ▶ Ensure results inform future projects, design standards, and policy adjustments, creating a feedback loop for continuous improvement and accountability
Barriers Addressed	▶ Weak mechanisms for maintaining equity goals after construction ▶ Inconsistent service coverage and responsiveness to need ▶ Limited inclusion of community feedback in operations and maintenance priorities ▶ Data and measurement gaps limiting identification of disparities ▶ Weak accountability and feedback mechanisms
Example Actions/Tools	▶ Ensure that service operations advance and do not contradict equity objectives identified in previous stages ▶ Create community feedback systems such as rider advisory committees, regular service surveys, multilingual customer service channels, and mechanisms for community input on service changes ▶ Monitor service operations over time to ensure equity objectives are met and identify emerging equity issues or implications ▶ Publish a public “Equity Report Card” that grades the project’s performance against the equity metrics established during the initiation stage, creating public accountability ▶ Maintain data collection on a regular on-going basis to track progress in relation to equity and key outcomes including satisfaction, wellbeing, activity participation ▶ Establish feedback loops to future projects by documenting lessons learned, updating design standards based on equity outcomes, revising evaluation criteria to reflect what was learned about differential impacts, and sharing findings across the organization and with other jurisdictions ▶ Conduct longitudinal impact studies that examine how project outcomes evolve over time and whether benefits and burdens remain equitably distributed as conditions change

Table 3: Embedding equity across a project lifecycle



SECTION 4

Good practices in Equitable Engagement

In the context of transportation projects, understanding lived and living experiences and local knowledge can supplement technical understanding to ensure that projects are not just technically viable, but also adequately serve users. The section is designed to help equip practitioners with tools in the design of equitable engagement processes.

Equitable Engagement

Equitable engagement seeks to ensure that people who have historically been underrepresented, marginalized, or most affected by a project have meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that shape their communities. This requires practitioners to remove barriers to participation and provide the time, resources, and support needed for communities to engage effectively. Equitable engagement is a two-way process that benefits both participants and project teams by improving understanding, trust, and decision-making.

The goal of equitable engagement is to ensure that the perspectives and knowledge shared through the process inform project decisions and outcomes. It also seeks to address historical and ongoing inequities by providing fair access to engagement opportunities and resources. This section highlights the importance of equitable engagement in transportation projects and provides guidance on how it can improve project outcomes and strengthen accountability to affected communities.



See Page 21 for tips about how to design an equitable engagement process

Why Engagement Matters

1. Engagement Can Improve Project Outcomes

- ▶ Undertaking equitable engagement leads to better outcomes at all stages of the project process, from project design through to approvals and monitoring.
- ▶ Projects that overlook a robust engagement process risk misunderstanding public priorities or missing key pieces of context. Without clear support and sufficient information, projects are more prone to delays.
- ▶ Engaging interest holders—especially those historically under-represented—helps identify issues early, build public support, and enabling practitioners to design projects that better align with community needs.
- ▶ Engagement processes can shed light on issues that project proponents may not have been aware of and allow for the identification of potential solutions.
- ▶ The information gathered through equitable engagement can help project teams better determine how to measure the success of a project and monitor project outcomes across all project stages.



See Section 5 on equity metrics

“

*When we make plans, we choose whose futures matter. Historically that choice has been people in power. **To plan for justice, we must consciously make a decision to plan with people who have not been in power.***

This means showing up for people and asking what they imagine for their futures. We have to reconsider our assumptions, and the data, tools, and techniques we utilize.

”

- Marisa A. Zapata, Planning Just Futures (2021)

2. Engagement Can Help with Information Gathering

Undertaking engagement can help fill gaps in information and identify considerations that cannot be identified through technical analysis.

In the context of transportation projects, understanding lived and living experiences and local knowledge can supplement technical understanding to ensure that projects are not just technically viable, but also adequately serve users.

By integrating technical and experiential information in transportation project planning and delivery, practitioners are better able to respond to a broad range of needs.

3. Engagement Helps Connect Practitioners to a Place

Undertaking equitable engagement can help practitioners identify groups that have historically been under-engaged and whose perspectives haven't been considered in past transportation planning efforts. When this happens, practitioners can better connect with the place they are working in by taking the time to understand its historical and cultural context.

By identifying key interest holders and their perspectives or concerns at the beginning of a project, and using that information to guide the process, practitioners can build accountability with the public.

A robust engagement process requires practitioners to understand a project's details, why decisions were made and the consequences of different alternatives.

4. Engagement can Help Build and Repair Relationships

Undertaking engagement can help practitioners build trust and repair relationships with communities who have previously been excluded from transportation projects. By meaningfully including communities in the project process, practitioners are more likely to cultivate community support for a project and ensure community input is reflected in project outcomes.

To build community trust, equity concerns that have been present during multiple projects should be addressed systemically, rather than on a project-by-project basis. This helps avoid engagement fatigue in equity-denied communities.

Case Study

The Green Line LRT connecting downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis was conceived as a major investment in regional connectivity and placemaking. While wider station spacing supported efficient LRT operations, it also introduced challenges for the communities the corridor passes through.

Community engagement revealed that the removal of closely spaced, locally serving bus stops disproportionately affected seniors and residents with mobility limitations. Residents also expressed concern that limited crossing opportunities along the corridor would constrain access to local services and disrupt established neighbourhood movement patterns.

In response, project planners incorporated additional access points at the ends of station platforms. These design interventions reduced walking distances to stations and introduced new corridor crossing points, helping preserve local connectivity. The resulting approach balanced operational efficiency with locally informed design adjustments to support both regional and neighbourhood-scale mobility objectives.



Foundational Principles of Equitable Engagement

Foundational principles for equitable engagement are described below. While every engagement process is different, the intent of the principles should be incorporated throughout each stage of a project.



Inclusive

- ▶ Practice the values of accessibility, inclusivity, intersectionality, and equity with sound engagement practices that are welcoming and accessible
- ▶ Reduce barriers for those who may have challenges to participation and include those outside traditional structures or processes



Respectful

- ▶ Engage from a place of respect for everyone
- ▶ Create safe and appropriate opportunities for community members to express their views and share ideas
- ▶ Value and respect lived experience and community expertise
- ▶ Listen to and respect the input received



Meaningful

- ▶ Be clear and transparent in what we are engaging on, what is open to change/input and what is not
- ▶ Demonstrate where input is used and clearly articulate when and why it isn't



Reciprocal

- ▶ Ensure your project benefits are shared with those who are engaged, not just proponents and practitioners
- ▶ Avoid techniques that disproportionately benefit project proponents
- ▶ Take time to cultivate reciprocal relationships prior to, during, and following engagement



Responsive

- ▶ Create varied ways to engage to enable people to participate and engage in a way that they are comfortable with
- ▶ Report back what you have heard and provide a clear rationale for decisions
- ▶ Be open to feedback on engagement methods to improve the process and meet the needs and interests of the community



Intentional

- ▶ Be intentional about who you are engaging with and how they are involved
- ▶ Be clear about what you are asking of people and how their involvement will influence the process

Designing Your Equitable Engagement Process

When designing an equitable engagement process, it is important to plan for each step with equity considerations in mind. The table below outlines some ways equity considerations can shape each step and ultimately deliver more equitable outcomes.

Project Step	Equity Considerations	Questions to Ask yourself
RFP & Project Scoping	▶ Clearly articulate how equity fits within the project scope, including the project objectives or outcomes, the approach and engagement methods, and the team composition or partnerships ▶ Identify how equity can be assessed in the response to proposals	▶ How does equity align with the project's purpose, organizational mandate, and values—and what level of internal buy-in exists to support this? ▶ What statutory engagement requirements apply, and what additional best practices are needed to ensure the process is equitable and responsive? ▶ What community context—historical, current, or ongoing—should shape how the project is scoped and how engagement is designed? ▶ How will engagement inform or influence the project, at what stages will input be most impactful to decision-making and how will the information gathered be used in later phases or decisions? ▶ What related projects, tools, processes, or partnerships already exist that could support this work?
Developing Project Schedule	▶ Ensure sufficient time is allocated to enable equitable engagement and participation, allowing all interest-holders meaningful opportunity to contribute ▶ Build in time to respond to unforeseen circumstances, enabling the team to adjust course as needed while maintaining equitable processes	▶ Are there factors that will influence when and how people are able to engage? ▶ Is there an opportunity to be flexible? ▶ How will you adjust your project process to respond to the engagement outcomes?
Project Staffing	▶ Assess the level of staff or consultant support needed to sustain equitable engagement throughout the project ▶ Consider the skills required to support equitable engagement and whether those skills are currently available within the team or need to be supplemented	▶ Are there people from the community whose involvement as part of the project team or otherwise could help to extend outreach and support more meaningful engagement? ▶ Are there people with specialized training (i.e. trauma-informed engagement) required?
Identifying Tools to Advance the Process	▶ Identify existing tools, processes, or organizations that can be leveraged to reduce duplication of effort and strengthen equitable practices ▶ Review any previous engagement efforts to determine what can be built upon in order to avoid engagement fatigue and maintain trust with interest-holders	▶ What data do you already have access to? ▶ Have you completed a comprehensive review of background materials/resources before connecting with the larger community? ▶ Have you spoken to people with local knowledge in selecting tools to use to advance the process?

Table 4: Designing your equitable engagement process

Developing a Communication and Engagement Strategy

A Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) is a living document that outlines the intended goals and objectives for an engagement process from start to finish. It creates a road map for the engagement, highlighting critical steps, considerations, and tactics to support meaningful engagement. It is meant to be updated and refined throughout the project as new information is gathered, priorities and directions change, and new audiences are identified.

A CES is a tool for practitioners to help identify answers to the following questions:

- » What are you engaging about?
- » Why are you engaging?
- » Who are you engaging with?
- » How are you engaging?

A CES is typically comprised of the following 4 sections:

1. Defining Scope and Objectives

- » Why are you engaging?
- » What are you trying to achieve?
- » What are the communications and engagement objectives for this project?

2. Process Design

- » What are you engaging on?
- » At what points during the process will you be engaging and why?
- » What considerations are you making for Equitable and Accessible Engagement

3. Identifying Audiences

- » Who is most directly affected by the project?
- » What is your audience identification strategy?

4. What are the Audience Messages?

- » How are the communications and messages being shared?
- » Who is the communication coming from?

5. Methods and Tools

- » What engagement tools/techniques will help facilitate discussion on key points of interest?

Case Studies

Jane and Finch (Toronto) is one of Canada's most diverse neighbourhoods, home to a high proportion of BIPOC residents. Recognizing the potential impacts of the **Finch West LRT**, the owners of a large mall site adjacent to the corridor sought to undertake an equitable engagement process to guide a future transit-oriented development on their lands.

The process was grounded in four principles – Accessible, Respectful, Meaningful, and Responsive – operationalized through three key strategies:

- ▶ Community Animators – 15+ compensated residents with deep local roots, diverse cultural affiliations, and strong local networks led outreach and built trust.
- ▶ A dedicated storefront inside the mall served as an open, accessible venue for drop-in engagement.
- ▶ An iterative four-phase process ensured community feedback shaped the plan at each stage.

Engagement methods were tailored to the community's intersectional and linguistic diversity through one-on-one interviews, discussion circles, dedicated sessions with youth and elders, design workshops, and online surveys – all co-designed with the Animator team and hosted at accessible locations including people's homes and the mall storefront. The approach helped identify community issues early, build public support, and ensure the development better aligned with community needs.

A different context called for a different approach. With a limited engagement budget for a study along the **East Eglinton Transit Corridor**, the team prioritized ensuring that feedback from larger public events was meaningfully incorporated. To achieve this, they established a series of "Sense-Making Sessions" – focused conversations with diverse community leaders designed to validate public feedback and test planning strategies developed in response to community issues. These were complemented by place-specific workshops and design-based engagement sessions with key community leaders at locations along the corridor, supplementing the broader evening open houses that formed part of the original project scope.

Together, these strategies allowed the team to extend the reach of a limited budget, draw on local knowledge to enrich the interpretation of results, and support a more meaningful feedback loop with the community.

Concepts and Methods to Inform Equitable Engagement

The following section outlines different approaches to engagement to help facilitate an equitable process that can yield more equitable outcomes.

1. Trauma-Informed Approach	
Description	▶ A method that recognizes how past and ongoing trauma—individual, collective, or systemic—shapes how people interact with planning processes ▶ Trauma-informed engagement emphasizes emotional safety, choice, empowerment, cultural humility, and predictable, transparent facilitation practices ▶ It avoids triggering environments or processes and seeks to build trust through compassion, clarity, and acknowledgment of harm
When to Use this Approach	▶ Engagement with communities that have experienced systemic racism, colonialism, displacement, violence, or government mistrust. ▶ Projects involving planning decisions with historical harms and past promises that have been broken - e.g., highway expansions, urban renewal areas, public-housing redevelopments. ▶ Any process requiring deep storytelling, lived-experience sharing, or multi-session engagement with vulnerable populations.
Additional Resources	▶ <i>Manitoba Trauma-Informed Toolkit (Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre)</i> ▶ <i>Trauma and Violence-Informed Approaches to Policy and Practice (Government of Canada)</i> ▶ <i>Trauma-Informed Community Building (KDE Hub)</i>
2. Dignity Infused Community Engagement (DICE)	
Description	▶ A structured framework for evaluating and designing engagement processes that intentionally incorporate diversity, inclusive practices, social cohesion, and equitable outcomes ▶ DICE focuses on representation (who participates), inclusion (how they participate), cohesion (relationship-building among groups), and equity (distribution of opportunities, knowledge, and influence)
When to Use this Approach	▶ At project initiation to assess what types of voices are missing and how to rebalance power ▶ In multicultural, multi-lingual communities where engagement must build trust across groups ▶ When evaluating whether an engagement approach is equitable or overly reliant on traditional voices
Additional Resources	▶ <i>Making Space Tools (Making Space)</i> ▶ <i>Dignity-Infused Community Engagement (Thrivance Group)</i>

3. Deliberative Dialogue/Democracy

Description	▶ A facilitated discussion model that brings diverse participants together to explore complex issues by weighing values, trade-offs, and shared responsibilities ▶ Unlike open houses or surveys, deliberative dialogue focuses on structured, reflective conversation where participants work toward common ground or areas of disagreement that can inform policy
When to Use this Approach	▶ When issues are contentious or involve competing values (e.g., density, affordability, parking, community benefits) ▶ When decision-makers need deeper insight into how residents reason about trade-offs ▶ Mid- to late-stage engagement when refining options or building consensus around preferred pathways
Additional Resources	▶ National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation Guides ▶ Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue Approaches - Resources ▶ IAP2: Spectrum of Public Engagement ▶ MASS LBP Civic Innovation Lab

4. Design Thinking

Description	▶ A human-centred, iterative problem-solving methodology using empathy, ideation, rapid prototyping, and testing. ▶ In engagement, design thinking centres lived experiences and encourages participants to generate creative solutions, prototype concepts (spaces, streets, programs), and refine ideas collaboratively.
When to Use this Approach	▶ Early-stage visioning, concept development, or scenario creation. ▶ Engagement with youth, families, newcomers, and communities that respond well to hands-on, visual, or interactive formats. ▶ Projects needing innovation, such as public-realm strategies, service design, open-space programming, or behaviour-based policy challenges.
Additional Resources	▶ IDEO Human-Centred Design Resources ▶ Design Thinking Resources (McMaster Institute for Research on Aging)

Table 5: Equitable approaches to engagement

Tips for Facilitating a Successful Equitable Engagement Process

Lower Barriers to Participation:

- ▶ Meet people where they are at
 - » Example: Host pop-up engagement activities at community hubs such as transit stations, libraries, grocery stores, schools, or cultural centres so residents can participate while completing routine trips.
- ▶ Reduce time and cost burdens
 - » Example: Offer engagement opportunities at multiple times (including evenings and weekends) and provide honouraria, transit fare or parking validation to reduce participation barriers
- ▶ Offer multiple ways to participate
 - » Example: Pair in-person engagement with low-bandwidth online options (SMS surveys, phone interviews, paper comment cards) to accommodate varying access to technology and comfort levels.

Provide Supports for Meaningful Participation:

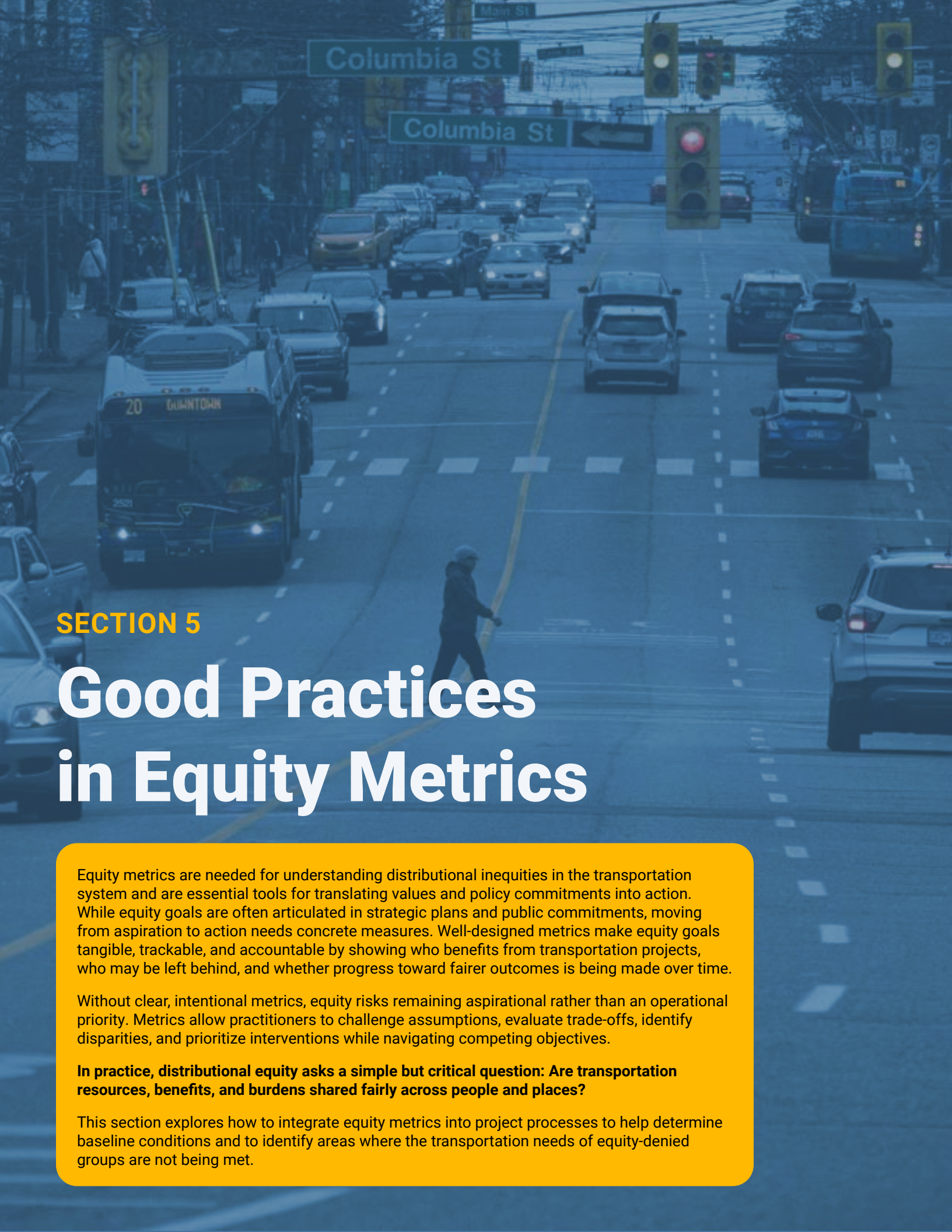
- ▶ Address language and communication needs
 - » Example: Allocate budget for professional interpreters and translated materials in communities where a dominant language other than English or French is spoken, and allow feedback in their preferred language.
- ▶ Use plain language and accessible formats
 - » Example: Replace technical drawings and jargon-heavy materials with plain-language summaries, visuals, and storytelling-based explanations that make transportation concepts easier to understand.

Leverage Knowledge and Connections of Existing Community Partners: .

- ▶ Partner with community-based organizations early
 - » Example: Engage community organizations, advocacy groups, or service providers during project scoping to help shape engagement goals, methods, and priorities before decisions are made.
- ▶ Compensate partners for their expertise and time
 - » Example: Provide funding or honouraria to community partners for outreach, facilitation, and interpretation work, recognizing their role as subject-matter experts rather than volunteers.
- ▶ Use partners to reach underrepresented voices
 - » Example: Collaborate with organizations serving seniors, newcomers, youth, or people with disabilities to tailor engagement approaches and reach residents who may not participate through traditional channels.

Build Trust with the Communities Being Engaged:

- ▶ Be transparent about scope and decision-making
 - » Example: Clearly communicate what aspects of the project are open to influence, how input will be used, and what constraints exist to avoid creating unrealistic expectations.
- ▶ Demonstrate responsiveness and accountability
 - » Example: Share back “what we heard” summaries and clearly show how community input influenced decisions—or explain why it could not—using accessible language and formats.



SECTION 5

Good Practices in Equity Metrics

Equity metrics are needed for understanding distributional inequities in the transportation system and are essential tools for translating values and policy commitments into action. While equity goals are often articulated in strategic plans and public commitments, moving from aspiration to action needs concrete measures. Well-designed metrics make equity goals tangible, trackable, and accountable by showing who benefits from transportation projects, who may be left behind, and whether progress toward fairer outcomes is being made over time.

Without clear, intentional metrics, equity risks remaining aspirational rather than an operational priority. Metrics allow practitioners to challenge assumptions, evaluate trade-offs, identify disparities, and prioritize interventions while navigating competing objectives.

In practice, distributional equity asks a simple but critical question: Are transportation resources, benefits, and burdens shared fairly across people and places?

This section explores how to integrate equity metrics into project processes to help determine baseline conditions and to identify areas where the transportation needs of equity-denied groups are not being met.

Distributional equity metrics: who benefits, who bears the burden, and what to do about it

While there is no single metric that captures equity in transportation, effective distributional metrics can:

- ▶ Show who benefits from transport systems:
 - » **Example:** the proportion of low-income residents with access to frequent transit within 10 minutes walking distance
- ▶ Show who bears costs:
 - » **Example:** traffic or noise pollution exposure in low-income neighbourhoods compared to others
- ▶ Track if investments reduce or reinforce disparities:
 - » **Example:** change over time in the gap between high- and low-income areas for pedestrian crash risk

What to measure

Distributional equity metrics should focus on both benefits and burdens. These indicators help practitioners identify where transportation systems are working well and where and how they are failing specific communities.

 **See Section 1 for a list of example benefits and burdens**

Key outcomes to track include:

- ▶ Access to opportunities (jobs, education, healthcare, services)
- ▶ Safety and health impacts (crashes, injuries, pollution exposure)
- ▶ Affordability and financial burden (fares, vehicle costs, mode dependency)
- ▶ Quality of travel (reliability, comfort, travel satisfaction, long commutes)
- ▶ Diversity of options (modes available and suited to different users and needs)

Key domains to track:

- ▶ Table 1 presents a set of domains that can be tracked in a systematic and comparable way.





Figure 8: Waterfront Station - Vancouver

Applying Equity Metrics in Transportation Planning

Recent guidance from the Transportation Research Board and the National Academies emphasizes that equity metrics must move from aspirational goals to routine planning practice. To operationalize this in transportation decision-making, practitioners should undertake the following steps:

- ▶ **Define equity-relevant outcomes** alongside traditional performance measures — including access to essential destinations and services, affordability, transportation insecurity, and exposure to environmental harms — grounded in local priorities.
- ▶ **Pilot test metrics using available data and community input**, then refine, validate, and scale them once they prove useful for decision-making, before wider adoption.
- ▶ **Strengthen data and tools** by prioritizing disaggregated and community-informed data that reflects lived experience, particularly for disadvantaged and underserved populations, and invest in improving data collection where equity gaps are not yet visible.
- ▶ **Apply metrics to guide investment choices**, not just to report disparities — linking them directly to funding prioritization and project selection.
- ▶ **Adapt measures to local and Indigenous contexts** by co-developing indicators with Indigenous communities and respecting self-determination, data sovereignty, and community-defined understandings of mobility, access, and safety.
- ▶ **Monitor progress over time**, recognizing that needs change and that long-term commitments are required to ensure transportation systems support health, economic opportunity, cultural connection, and well-being.

The Domains of Equity

These metrics should be interpreted in context to avoid deficit narratives that overlook community strengths, resilience, and assets. For example, recognition equity honours diverse histories and knowledge systems, while procedural equity ensures communities are engaged to help define success and how data is used.

Early engagement can help identify issues early. Work with your project teams to determine which of the dimensions listed below are important to address and relevant to your project.



Please refer to Section 1 for equity dimensions in transportation planning and practice

Domain						
	 (Im)Mobility	 Accessibility	 Level of service	 Time burden	 Affordability	 Pollution
Example metrics	Average trip distance, travel time, trip frequency, mode share, availability of shared mobility systems, density of walking and cycling infrastructure Suppressed trip frequency and suppressed trip purposes	Access to jobs, schools, healthcare using cumulative-opportunity or gravity-based measures Access to infrastructure and density measures (points of interest, intersection density, transit stops, quality of infrastructure)	Transit frequency, service hours, stop/station coverage, crowding levels, cancellation rates, reliability	Disproportionate share of time spent commuting or performing care-related travel tasks	Share of household income spent on transport, availability of discounted passes, fare capping, rebates for micromobility (e.g., e-bikes), lower rates for shared mobility systems (e.g., income-based)	Exposure to NOx, CO, PM2.5 levels near residences, schools, and workplaces; asthma rates, climate variables (e.g., tree canopy, heat)
Example of people/communities who might require equity considerations	People with disabilities, older adults, rural residents, low-income individuals	Women, youth, newcomers, racialized groups, transit-dependent populations	Shift workers, essential workers, people living in transit deserts	Caregivers, women, low-income transit users, suburban residents, people who cannot/do not drive	Low-income groups, students, seniors, unemployed individuals	Children, people living in high-traffic areas, racialized communities

Table 6: Transport-related benefits and burdens: domains, example metrics and example population group

Domain						
						
Noise	Community severance	Personal security	Road safety	Resilience	Digital accessibility	Transport-related displacement
Decibel levels from roads, rail, and airports; duration of exposure	Barriers to crossing (e.g. highways without crossings); travel detours due to infrastructure	Perceptions of safety (e.g. survey-based, community-engagement-based or based on previous work/reports to avoid overburdening communities); incident reports; lighting and surveillance presence	Vision Zero targets and safety indicators (e.g., fatalities and serious injuries by road user/mode); traffic calming treatments; cycling/walking level of traffic stress (LTS)	System recovery time after disruptions; availability of transport alternatives; disaster preparedness; adaptability	Access to real-time information, online services for trip planning or paratransit booking	Loss of housing or services due to transport infrastructure projects; trade-offs between housing and transport costs
Communities near highways, rail lines, or airports; renters and public housing residents	Older adults, children, pedestrians, cyclists, low-mobility individuals	Women, LGBTQ+ individuals, racialized groups, night-time travelers	Pedestrians, cyclists, children, older adults, low-income neighborhoods	People in climate-vulnerable areas, low-income or car-less households	Older adults, people with disabilities, digitally excluded or low-literacy individuals	Tenants, racialized groups, low-income households, informal settlements, people who cannot/do not drive



Who to measure for

Metrics should be chosen with local context and community input in mind, since histories, social structures, and systems differ across places. Uniform or standard measures can miss what truly matters locally. Metrics should be disaggregated wherever possible by neighbourhood, income, gender, age, race or ethnicity, disability status, immigration status, among other key sociodemographic and household characteristics. Aggregate averages often hide who is being left behind, which can lead to investments that do not address real equity gaps.

If disaggregated data are unavailable, this should be treated as an action item, not a limitation: improving data collection and reporting practices is a necessary step toward equitable planning. Additionally, different data types should be valued, such as community stories, qualitative insights, and traditional knowledge alongside quantitative metrics, to fully capture diverse experiences and priorities.



How to use the metrics

Distributive justice metrics are not only diagnostic tools. They should directly inform policy choices and investment priorities. Practitioners can use them to:

- ▶ Identify underserved or overburdened groups and areas
- ▶ Prioritize targeted interventions and funding allocation
- ▶ Compare the equity impacts of alternative projects or scenarios
- ▶ Monitor whether policies are closing gaps over time

Linking distributional indicators to real-world outcomes such as health improvements, increased employment, or higher travel satisfaction strengthens the case for equity-focused investments and makes benefits more visible to decision-makers and the public.

At the same time, metrics should be interpreted within their broader social and community context to avoid deficit-based narratives that overlook local strengths, resilience, and assets. Other conceptualizations of equity, such as recognitional and procedural equity, are also important in helping define what success looks like, how knowledge is valued, and how data should be interpreted and used.

 Please refer to page 3 for equity dimensions

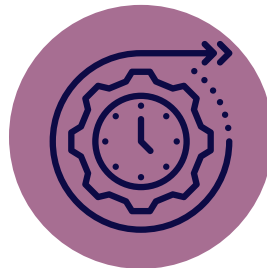


Track change over time

Equity is not a one-time assessment. Metrics should be used to track progress, not just current conditions. This means asking:

- ▶ Are gaps in access, safety, and affordability shrinking?
- ▶ Are equity-focused investments delivering the intended outcomes?
- ▶ Are benefits reaching priority populations as planned?

Monitoring trends over time supports accountability and allows agencies to adjust strategies when outcomes fall short.



Consider impacts on future generations

Distributive justice also has a temporal component. Transport decisions made today, especially those related to infrastructure, emissions, and long-term funding, shape the options available to future generations. Practitioners should include forward-looking indicators, such as:

- ▶ Progress toward emissions reduction targets
- ▶ Share of investment in sustainable and low-carbon modes
- ▶ Culture shift around automobility (e.g., programs and investments that support children and youth in using sustainable modes throughout their lives)
- ▶ Proportion of funding allocated to long-lived, inclusive infrastructure
- ▶ Accessibility and mobility outcomes for aging populations and people with mobility challenges

Embedding these indicators helps ensure that today's equity gains do not come at the expense of long-term sustainability, and that future users inherit transport systems that are safe, affordable, and accessible. This is particularly important in the context of population aging. In Canada, older adults, especially those aged 85 and over, represent one of the fastest-growing population groups and are expected to triple in size by 2050¹. As future populations are more likely to experience mobility, sensory, or accessibility challenges, transportation systems should be designed to support diverse mobility needs across the life course.

¹ Source: Government of Canada, 2021 census data

Measuring transport equity and transport poverty: from concepts to practice

Transportation equity frameworks increasingly use concepts such as *transport poverty*, *accessibility poverty*, or *time poverty* to identify populations experiencing disproportionate mobility burdens. These concepts can be useful for monitoring inequities and tracking progress over time. However, their use remains actively debated and should be applied carefully in practice.

Why is the concept used?

- ▶ Terms such as *transport poverty* help highlight how transportation systems can systematically disadvantage certain groups.
- ▶ They provide measurable ways to identify underserved populations and monitor whether inequities are improving or worsening.
- ▶ Tracking who experiences overlapping disadvantages remains essential for improving conditions on the ground.

Key challenges and limitations

- ▶ **Language and stigma:** The term *poverty* can feel stigmatizing or othering, particularly when applied to specific mobility conditions (e.g., “time poverty”) rather than lived economic hardship.
- ▶ **Thresholds are contested:** Defining minimum standards or thresholds (e.g., minimum accessibility levels) is difficult because needs vary across individuals, places, and abilities. A threshold that appears adequate may still represent significant barriers for some users, such as people with disabilities.

Did you know?

Despite the difficulties in finding thresholds worldwide, a global study involving more than 1,300 planning practitioners found strong agreement that destinations within 1,600 metres are generally considered “proximate” and accessible. Many practitioners also associated a 15-minute walking distance with access to essential daily needs such as schools, parks, pharmacies, and grocery stores. These findings were consistent across diverse geographic contexts worldwide.

Source: Silva, C., Büttner, B., Seisenberger, S., Teixeira, J. F., Baquero-Larriva, M. T., Beyazit, E., ... & Visvardis, D. (2025). Proximity-centred accessibility—A conceptual debate involving planning practitioners worldwide. *Cities*, 167, 106376.

- ▶ **Who defines adequacy?** Decisions about standards and benchmarks involve value judgments about acceptable living conditions and mobility opportunities, raising questions about whose perspectives shape these definitions
- ▶ **Above-threshold does not mean equitable:** Individuals or communities classified as “not poor” according to a metric may still experience meaningful mobility disadvantages and substantial barriers. Metrics cannot fully capture lived experiences, including safety, comfort, dignity, or social inclusion.

Implications for practitioners

- ▶ Use concepts like transport poverty as possible diagnostic tools, not definitive labels. Alternative framings such as *burdens*, *barriers*, or *disadvantage* may resonate better with communities.
- ▶ Complement quantitative indicators with qualitative and community-based knowledge.
- ▶ Treat thresholds as signals of potential concern, rather than fixed minimum acceptable standards.
- ▶ Focus on identifying gaps, barriers, and cumulative burdens across the transport system and its interaction with housing, health, and urban services.
- ▶ Remain transparent about assumptions, data limitations, and normative choices embedded in equity metrics.



Applying equity and transport poverty metrics

To measure transport equity and transport poverty in practice, practitioners should:

1. Distinguish between equity and poverty metrics

Use equity metrics to compare how benefits and burdens are distributed across groups, and transport poverty metrics to identify who falls below a minimum acceptable standard or signal of concern.

2. Select metrics that match the policy question

Use inequality measures (e.g. group comparisons or ratios) to assess disparities, and threshold-based measures to identify absolute shortfalls in access, affordability, safety, or exposure to harms. Complement these with strengths- or asset-based metrics that highlight where transport systems and community initiatives are working well, helping reveal existing supports and identify needs that formal transportation services may overlook.

3. Define and continuously question minimum or acceptable standards

Establish what constitutes sufficient, minimum, or acceptable standards for access or mobility based on local context, policy goals, and community input. Treat thresholds as signals of potential concern rather than fixed benchmarks, and approach the goal of ensuring equitable mobility for all as an ongoing process of critical reflection, recognition, and systems change.

4. Test sensitivity and document assumptions

Assess how results change when thresholds, modes, or spatial units vary, and clearly document these assumptions to support transparency and informed decision-making.

5. Use metrics to prioritize those with the least

Apply results to refocus investments toward populations and areas experiencing the deepest and most persistent transport disadvantage.

6. Ground metrics in lived experience

Complement quantitative indicators with community engagement to ensure measures reflect real mobility constraints and local definitions of need.

For more information, check these out:

- ▶ Academic paper for more details about metrics: Karner, A., Pereira, R. H., & Farber, S. (2025). Advances and pitfalls in measuring transportation equity. *Transportation*, 52(4), 1399-1427.
- ▶ Application of the metrics: Equity Analysis of The 2051 Regional Transportation Plan (in “Available tools and data sources” within the guide)



Figure 9: Go Train, Ontario

Equity metrics within different projects and their lifecycle

Choosing the right measures

Good equity metrics are context-sensitive, meaningful, and practical. Practitioners should begin by asking:

- ▶ What are we trying to improve or prevent?
- ▶ For whom?
- ▶ And how will we know if we're succeeding?

Depending on the nature of the project, impacts might be more short-term or long-term, direct or indirect, and affect different population groups in different ways.

The type and scale of a planning or investment initiative will determine which metrics are most relevant. For example,

- ▶ A transport master plan or regional plan often requires broad, high-level metrics related to accessibility, affordability, and emissions, typically applied across geographies or demographic groups over a 10–30-year horizon. These may include metrics like regional accessibility to jobs by mode, household transport costs by income group, or exposure to pollution by neighbourhood.
- ▶ In contrast, a business case for a specific project may prioritize more targeted indicators such as cost-benefit ratios, projected ridership by income quintile, or changes in travel time for disadvantaged groups.

- ▶ At a more localized scale, a station area or secondary plan might focus on metrics that capture first/last-mile connectivity, walkability, displacement risk, and safety, particularly for seniors, children, and people with disabilities.
- ▶ A corridor plan—such as one for a rapid transit or active transportation corridor—may prioritize changes in mode share, traffic safety outcomes, or access to key services within walking distance.
- ▶ Finally, for individual site-level projects (e.g., development applications or transit-oriented projects), equity metrics might be hyperlocal, such as sidewalk continuity, availability of bike parking, or proximity to affordable housing units.

In all cases, aligning the scale and purpose of the project with tailored equity indicators ensures the evaluation is both fair and actionable.

Last but not least, identifying meaningful measures also means engaging communities to understand what equity looks like from their perspective. What matters to planners may differ from what matters to residents. What appears equitable in a data summary or on a map may correspond to areas experiencing very real mobility barriers that are difficult to measure. Participatory approaches to metric design can ensure that indicators reflect lived experiences and community priorities.



Embedding metrics across the project lifecycle

Equity metrics are most effective when they are used consistently throughout the project lifecycle, not added at the end for reporting or compliance. Different stages of a project require different types of metrics and decisions. Embedding equity early, revisiting it during delivery, and assessing outcomes over time helps ensure that stated equity commitments translate into real-world impacts.

How to embed equity metrics in the project lifecycle

To ensure equity metrics inform decisions from start to finish, practitioners should:

- 1. Problem diagnosis**
Use disaggregated data and community engagement to identify where inequities exist, who is affected, and how current conditions limit access, safety, affordability, or well-being. This phase should set a strong foundation by revealing patterns of exclusion, unmet needs, or unjust outcomes.
- 2. Project initiation**
Set clear equity objectives at the outset. Embed equity expectations in project scopes, procurement processes, and partnership agreements to establish accountability early. This sets the tone and commitment for the rest of the project.
- 3. Project planning and design**
Select context-specific equity metrics to compare alternatives and guide design choices. Assess how different options affect equity-denied groups, and use participatory approaches to ensure chosen measures reflect community priorities.
- 4. Project implementation and monitoring**
Track progress against equity commitments during delivery. Monitor both processes and outcomes using disaggregated indicators, and address unintended impacts as they emerge.
- 5. Project evaluation**
Assess whether equity objectives were achieved within the project time horizon. This includes both quantitative assessments and qualitative feedback from affected communities. Use findings to inform future projects, policies, and funding decisions.

Embedding equity metrics into the lifecycle also means institutionalizing their use. This requires more than choosing the right indicators—it involves setting clear expectations across agencies and departments, building capacity among staff, ensuring that equity is part of procurement and performance management, and aligning internal incentives with equity goals. It also means making equity a regular part of practice, rather than an add-on or compliance exercise. By embedding equity throughout the project lifecycle and tailoring metrics to fit the scale, type, and phase of each initiative, planners and policymakers can move from intention to impact in building more just and inclusive transportation systems.

Challenges and cautions

When used thoughtfully, equity metrics can help turn intentions into concrete action. They guide planners toward outcomes that matter, make structural inequities more visible, and support trust-building with communities. However, their use requires care and a genuine commitment to change. As equity practice continues to evolve, practitioners have both the opportunity and the responsibility to ensure that what is measured truly reflects what is valued.

While metrics are powerful, they are not neutral. All measures reflect particular values and priorities, and poorly chosen metrics can reinforce the very inequities they are meant to challenge.



Practitioners must be cautious of:

Shortcuts	False precision	Unintended consequences	Instrumentalization	“Symbolic equity”
Over-reliance on what is easy to measure (e.g., commute times) instead of what is meaningful (e.g., accessibility or perceived personal safety).	Quantitative indicators may imply objectivity even when based on assumptions or incomplete data. Many indicators are not thoroughly assessed for completeness or bias.	For example, using average travel times might hide inequities experienced by specific groups.	Applying metrics after key decisions have already been made, reducing them to a documentation exercise rather than a decision-making tool.	When metrics are used to signal equity without meaningful change to processes or outcomes.

To avoid these pitfalls, metrics must be transparent, reflexive, and open to critique and revision. They should support—not replace—community dialogue and ethical decision-making.

Available tools and data sources

Several tools and resources are available to support equity analysis in transportation:

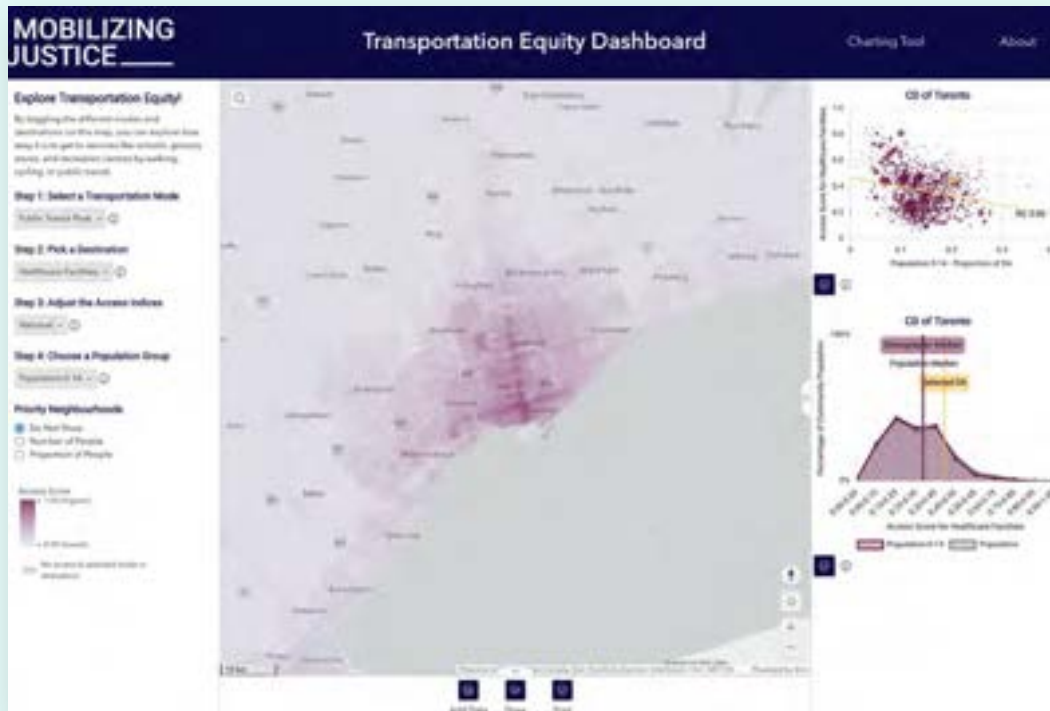


Figure 10: Transportation Equity Dashboard

Mobilizing Justice (MJ) Accessibility and Transport Equity Dashboard

MJ leveraged spatial accessibility measures and applied an equity lens to enable communities, researchers, urban planners, and decision-makers to explore, analyze, and advocate for transportation systems that are fair, inclusive, and accessible to all.

The dashboard has **three main components**.

- ▶ **The Spatial Access Measures (SAM)**, a national dataset developed by Statistics Canada and Infrastructure Canada that includes accessibility scores to educational facilities, health care facilities, employment, grocery stores, cultural and arts facilities, and sports and recreational facilities. The scores cover all regions, cities, towns, and rural areas in Canada, and reflect how reachable selected destinations are from different starting points (origins) in a region or municipality using three different transport modes: public transport, both in peak and off-peak hours, cycling, and walking.
- ▶ These measures from the SAM are combined with the second component, which is the **social and economic equity data from the census**. This way, in the dashboard, users can see how accessibility varies from

location to location and across 20 different population groups characterized by multiple indicators of social disadvantage, empowering them to explore, analyze and advocate for fair transport in their communities.

- ▶ Finally, when a dashboard user clicks on a certain area within the map view, the third component activates, with several **interactive tools providing charts** and more information on how accessibility compares to other areas, and how accessibility for the selected population group compares to accessibility for the general population.

The 'Highlight **Priority Neighbourhoods**' checkbox updates the map to highlight areas that may be at risk of transport poverty. These are DAs with the lowest accessibility (accessibility scores in the bottom 25% of all DAs) and the highest proportion of people belonging to the demographic group you selected in the equity lens (proportion of the population in the top 25% of all DAs). If you adjust the SAM scores to a CMA, CD, or CSD, the priority neighbourhoods are selected based on the scores in the region or municipality rather than at a national scale.

Access the dashboard here:
<https://dashboard.mobilizingjustice.ca>

MJ Equity Charting Tool

This tool shows the proportion of people within a selected demographic group who live in areas with poor access to key destinations. The tool offers a practical measure of transportation disadvantage across different communities and geographies.

How it works

By default, “low access” is defined as areas falling in the bottom 25% of SAM scores nationally. This threshold can be adjusted to reflect different definitions of low access depending on your analytical needs. Results can be examined and compared across multiple geographic levels including:

- ▶ Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs);
- ▶ Census Divisions (CDs); and
- ▶ Census Subdivisions (CSDs), provinces, territories, cities, and regions;

The results can be broken down by transport mode, destination type, and demographic group.

The charting tool complements the Priority Neighbourhoods map feature in the **Mobilizing Justice (MJ) Accessibility and Transport Equity Dashboard**. These two tools work together to provide a more complete picture of transportation equity. It is important to understand how they differ:

The Transportation Equity Charting Tool takes a broad distributional view by identifying all areas below the low-access threshold and shows what proportion of a selected population lives within them.

The Priority Neighbourhoods map feature highlights specific areas where low accessibility and high concentrations of a selected population group overlap.

Used together, these tools allow practitioners to both measure the scale of transportation disadvantage across a population and identify the specific locations where that disadvantage is most concentrated.

Access the equity charting tool here:

<https://edumaps.esri.ca/mj-charting>

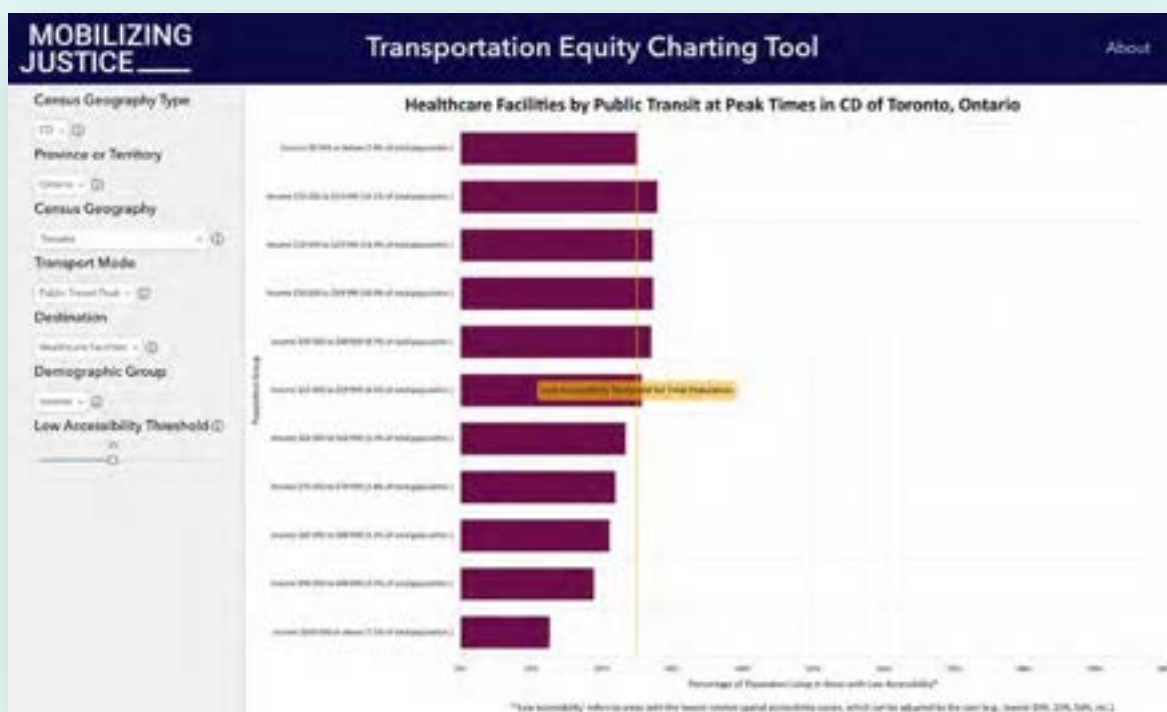




Figure 12: National Survey on Transportation Poverty

MJ National Survey on Transport Poverty

Transport poverty remains a poorly defined and inconsistently measured issue, despite growing attention in transport research and policy. Challenges related to data quality and comparability, as noted by the European Commission, have hindered efforts to understand its full scope and severity.

In Canada, the lack of standardized national data has made it difficult to assess how transport-related barriers impact different communities. To address this gap, the Mobilizing Justice Partnership developed and implemented the first large-scale survey on transport poverty and transport-related social exclusion in the country.

The survey aimed to build a comprehensive dataset illustrating how transportation systems shape daily life, and to identify what level of transportation provision might be considered a necessary baseline to eliminate transport poverty. It explored five key themes: barriers and constraints, well-being outcomes, satisfaction and unmet needs, suppressed and excess travel, and aspirations. Data were gathered by a professional survey firm from over 27,000 respondents across Canada, including over 11,000 low-income households (with incomes below \$60,000/year). The survey spanned all 41 Census Metropolitan Areas and included rural and non-urban areas as provincial units, providing an unprecedented dataset to examine the causes, consequences, and spatial distribution of transport poverty across structurally marginalized groups and diverse geographic contexts.

Access the survey here:

<https://mobilizingjustice.ca/working-groups/national-survey-of-transport-poverty-and-trse>

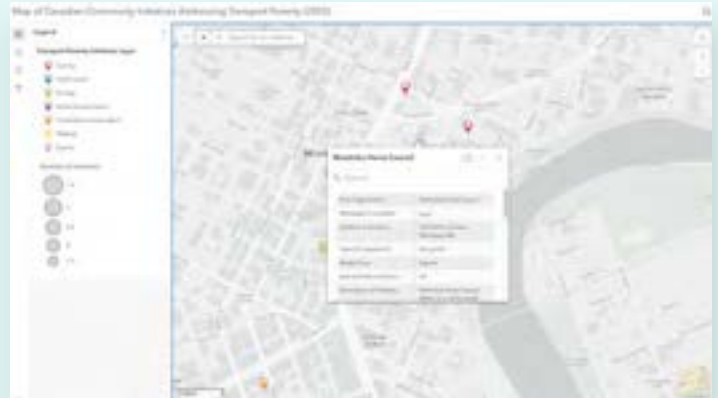


Figure 13: TCAT Catalogue

MJ & TCAT's Catalogue of Canadian Community Initiatives addressing transport poverty

The Catalogue of Canadian Community Initiatives addressing transport poverty is a project of the Mobilizing Justice Partnership and The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT). It documents and describes community initiatives across Canada that are addressing transport poverty and increasing modal choices. The catalogue was first released in 2021, with updates in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

You can find the catalogue and reports containing analysis and insights here:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=773ceee8b9074db586cbd7b1c980a9a7>

This interactive map provides a visual overview of over 350 community initiatives contained within the catalogue. It was created to provide a way for advocates, academics, and practitioners alike to explore and learn about the wide range of inspiring ways that communities support transport equity. Using the map, you can search for specific initiatives, organizations, and addresses, or refine your search using filters. Clicking on points in the map will provide an overview of the initiative(s) in that location.

The initiatives in the catalogue were gathered from websites, social media, and personal networks. While every effort was made to capture and map as many initiatives as possible, some were likely missed, so the aim is to update regularly.



Figure 14: National Survey on Transport Poverty Dashboard



Figure 15: Equity Analysis of Regional Transportation Plan

The National Survey on Transport Poverty Dashboard

Using the MJ National Survey on Transport Poverty, The National Survey Dashboard transforms data into insight, empowering you to explore, compare, and understand transportation inequities across Canada. The dashboard consists in three main modules:

1. **Explore:** Explore data by selecting a geographic area, population group, and survey theme. This module generates summary statistics and visualizations to highlight key patterns and disparities.
2. **Compare:** Compare data by selecting 2 to 5 regions with a thematic focus. This module generates comparative summary statistics and visualizations across selected regions and population groups.
3. **Rank:** Rank selected regions based on chosen population groups and survey themes. This module generates sorted tables to highlight relative positions and differences across regions.

Available at:

<https://survey.mobilizingjustice.ca>

Equity Analysis of The 2051 Regional Transportation Plan

In 2023, Drs. Steven Farber and Willem Klumpenhower were retained by Metrolinx to evaluate the current state of transit equity in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and assess how the 2051 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update could affect future equity outcomes. Overall, the resource provides a practical example of how transportation agencies can integrate equity considerations into long-range transportation planning, scenario evaluation, and accessibility analysis.

The resulting report combined applied research and methodological guidance to support future equity-focused transportation planning and analysis. The work developed a comprehensive set of equity metrics, reviewed and refined population groups used in equity analysis through community engagement, examined transportation affordability using Statistics Canada data, and mapped areas of transport poverty where underserved areas intersect with marginalized populations. The study also evaluated how different future transportation scenarios could change the distribution of benefits and equity outcomes across the region.

Available at:

https://mobilizingjustice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Metrolinx_2051_RTP_Update_MJ_Summary_2026-05-21-online.pdf

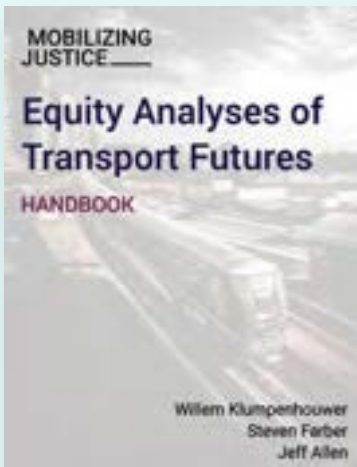


Figure 16: Equity Analyses of Transport Futures

Mobilizing Justice's Equity Analyses of Transport Futures Handbook

This is a training guide and companion handbook for a series of quantitative analyses that can be used to measure the distributive equity impacts of transportation infrastructure scenarios or projects. This handbook outlines four ways to measure how changes in travel times and demand across various potential infrastructure scenarios are distributed across different demographic and socioeconomic scenarios. The handbook requires no prior experience with coding, but will require downloading Python and QGIS.

Access the handbook here:

<https://mobilizingjustice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Equity-of-Transport-Futures-Handbook-1.pdf>



Figure 17: Accessibility Analysis for Planning Applications

Mobilizing Justice's accessibility analysis for planning applications handbook

This handbook presents accessibility analysis for planning applications: it walks readers through the components of accessibility analysis as well as its potential uses when planning for equity.

The first part explores how travel behaviour is intertwined with accessibility measures through an impedance function, the implications of travel behaviour assumptions and how analysts may select parameters for these assumptions. In the second part, two types of accessibility measures, unconstrained and constrained, are defined and presented in an empirical example. The distinction in the interpretation between the output from both types of measures are clearly described.

Access the handbook here:

<https://mobilizingjustice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/tools-report-2.pdf>

Federal and municipal datasets

Including census data, travel surveys, land use and infrastructure databases, and public health indicators. These can be layered using GIS to identify spatial patterns, leveraging open data sources available.

A few ideas and resources to get you started

- ▶ [Transit GTFS Packages](#)
- ▶ [Open Street Map](#)
- ▶ [Strava Metro](#)
- ▶ [Canadian Public Transit Network Database](#)
- ▶ [Canadian Urban Environmental Health Research Consortium \(CANUE\)](#)
- ▶ [The Linkable Open Data Environment \(LODE\)](#)
- ▶ [HealthyPlan.city](#)
- ▶ [Canadian Cycling Network Database](#)
- ▶ [Canadian Community Health Survey \(CCHS – mobility-related modules\)](#)
- ▶ [General Social Survey of Canada – waves including time use surveys](#)
- ▶ [UofT Map and Data Library](#)
- ▶ [CHASS Census Data](#)
- ▶ [CensusMapper \(for those who can't access CHASS\)](#)
- ▶ [National Collision Database](#)
- ▶ [Crowdsourced cycling data](#)
- ▶ [StatsCan Surveys and statistical programs](#)

Context-specific databases. For example, for the Greater Toronto Area (GTA):

- ▶ [Transportation Tomorrow Survey \(OD Data\)](#)
- ▶ [Metrolinx Open Data](#)
- ▶ [Toronto Traffic Collisions Open Data](#)
- ▶ [Open Data Portal of the City of Toronto](#), including:
 - » Street Networks
 - » Bicycle counts, routes, shops, parking, sharing
 - » Parking lots
 - » Sidewalk inventory
 - » TTC Ridership, routes, schedules, delays

Community-generated data

Community-generated data has become an increasingly valuable resource for understanding transport equity and poverty, especially in contexts where official data is incomplete, outdated, or misaligned with lived experiences. These data sources—such as participatory mapping, community-led surveys, and outputs from engagement processes—offer qualitative and experiential insights that can uncover spatial and social inequalities often invisible in conventional datasets.

Recently, Toronto's Open Data team have opened the possibility of community-generated datasets alongside official government data, recognizing their complementary value in planning and evaluation efforts. This effort might come with several challenges, as highlighted here: <https://open.toronto.ca/exploring-the-future-of-open-data-hosting-community-generated-datasets-on-torontos-open-data-portal>

Similarly, the Community Data Program (CDP) is a national, membership-based initiative that supports Canadian public, non-profit, and community organizations in accessing and using over 2,000 data products from public and private sources, with a focus on small geographic scales such as municipalities and neighbourhoods to inform policy, program development, and community storytelling.

In addition to data access, the CDP offers training, technical support, and a range of tools tailored to users of varying skill levels. It fosters a cross-Canada network of more than 2,400 individuals from 400+ organizations, encouraging collaboration and the sharing of best practices in evidence-based community development. See more about this program here: <https://communitydata.ca>

Glossary

Accessibility

The possibility or ease of reaching destinations. The term addresses whether people can reach activities such as jobs, education, healthcare, services, and daily needs using the transportation system within a reasonable time and cost, and by multiple modes.

Affordability

The financial burden associated with the costs of reaching destinations by different transportation alternatives. Refers to whether transportation costs are manageable relative to one's household income and whether low-cost options are available.

Barriers (to equity)

Conditions that constrain the delivery and maximization of transport benefits in a fair and equitable manner. The main types of barriers include, but are not limited to, institutional, organizational and culture, procedural, data and measurement, and administrative.

Community Severance

The separation of residents from their community as well as the facilities and services they use within their community and the wider urban environment. The development of transportation infrastructure (e.g., arterial roads, highways, rail routes) divides space and communities.

Community severance stemming from the development of transportation infrastructure has historically affected racialized and low-income communities while preserving community and neighbourhoods for white and more privileged communities. The outcome is weaker social connections and access to resources and necessary destinations.

Distributive Justice

Whether institutions, policies, and investments produce a fair allocation of benefits and burdens among people and space. In transportation, this translates to how access, safety, cost burdens, pollution, and service quality are distributed across population groups and communities.

Distributional Equity Indicators

Distributional analysis is used to show who gains and who loses from transportation investments across different groups (e.g., income, geography, etc.). A distributional equity indicator is a metric used to show how benefits and burdens are distributed across places and population groups. Therefore, they are the necessary set of tools for translating values and policy commitments into action.

Quantitative indicators may include levels of accessibility by different modes, affordability and cost burden, safety, activity participation, environmental burdens, and service quality and coverage. Qualitative indicators may include perceived accessibility, perceptions of safety, and barriers to travel and activity participation.

These measurements make strategic plans and public commitments tangible, trackable, and accountable. From a transportation perspective, such equity metrics help practitioners understand who benefits from transportation projects, who may be left behind, and whether progress toward fairer outcomes is being made over time.

Environmental Exposure

Whether people are disproportionately exposed to burdens such as air pollution, noise, and community severance. A primary goal of investing in walking, cycling, and transit is to reduce these negative externalities by replacing driving with more sustainable modes.

Equality

The equal treatment of people and communities. The equal allocation of transport benefits and burdens among people and across communities and locations. (See difference from Equity)

Equitable Engagement

A set of processes that ensure fair, inclusive, and meaningful participation, especially among marginalized groups who experience greater transportation barriers and have historically been excluded from decision-making processes. Equitable engagement emphasizes going beyond collecting input by meeting communities where they gather rather than expecting they can show up to engagement meetings at typical locations. Additionally, equitable engagement reduces barriers to engagement (e.g., knowledge, time, language, childcare, trust) and uses transparent processes that lead to real influence in decision making.

Equity

The commitment to the fair allocation of benefits and burdens, which often requires differential investment or treatment according to need. Equity in transportation planning focuses on how the benefits and burdens of mobility are distributed across neighbourhoods, modes, and members of society, and is often considered across four key dimensions (distributional, recognitional, procedural, and structural). (See difference from Equality)

Transport Equity

The recognition that how people move is shaped by different social, economic, cultural, and geographic circumstances, resulting in different resources and barriers across population groups. In this respect, equitable transportation planning and practice seek to achieve a 'level playing field' for everyone involved while minimizing disproportionate safety, environmental, and quality-of-life impacts on communities.

Equity-denied Groups

Also called marginalized groups in this guide. Population groups and communities that have historically been denied fair access to opportunities and transport services, and/or who currently face systemic barriers to transportation and mobility that deny them access to resources and opportunities needed for participation in daily activities.

Transportation systems inflict burdens, which are shaped by social, economic, cultural, and geographic circumstances, and often fall most heavily on people who are marginalized in society. These groups include, but are not limited to, indigenous communities, people with disabilities, women, children and youth, low-income households, older adults, LGBTQ+, newcomers, shift workers, and more.

Equity-enhancing Policies

Decisions, processes, and evaluations that enhance equity by closing measured gaps in benefits and burdens (e.g., access, affordability, exposure) for equity-denied/deserving groups.

Intergenerational Justice

The principle that today's (and past) transport decisions (e.g., infrastructure, service, budgets) have enduring effects that will be inherited by future generations. This has implications for the temporal component of transport justice, as measuring equity effectively requires a long-term view: identifying not just current conditions but also tracking progress toward intended goals over time.

Justice

The idea of giving people what is due to them as a basic right, through institutions and rules that secure fair treatment and fair outcomes. Mobility justice scholars argue that dignified mobility and access to fair transportation is a human right. Typically involves distributional, procedural, and recognitional concerns.

Mobility

It focuses on whether people can move freely with few barriers and burdens (e.g., physical effort, cost) and by multiple modes. Mobility goes beyond transportation infrastructure to emphasize the ability, experience and quality of movement for different people and communities. The concept ties directly to distributional equity (who gets safe/reliable options) and recognition equity (whose needs and barriers shape that movement)

Participation

Whether planning processes are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to diverse needs.

Project Lifecycle

The sequence of stages through which a transportation project progresses. These stages typically involve problem diagnosis, initiation and feasibility, planning and assessment, planning and design, procurement, delivery and construction, and operation and maintenance. From an equity perspective, each stage offers unique opportunities to incorporate equity considerations, indicators, and metrics into transportation decision-making and service provision.

Resilience

The ability of a system or community to absorb, adapt, and recover from external shocks and disruptions (e.g., climate, budget) while preserving essential functions.

Safety and Security

The provision of infrastructure and protection from traffic-related risks, as well as from real or perceived threats of harassment, discrimination, or violence while travelling.

Time burden

Burdens created by long travel times for different activities or purposes, such as work or care. Time burdens typically affect people who do not drive or do not have reliable access to a car, people living with disabilities and people who live in areas with poor accessibility by transit, walking, and biking.

Transportation-related displacement

The loss of housing, services, or community presence resulting from rising costs or changing land uses associated with transportation investments or infrastructure improvements. This concept reflects the close interdependence between transportation and housing systems, including cost trade-offs and outcomes such as gentrification and the redistribution of accessibility benefits.

Transport poverty

A condition in which individuals or communities face limited, unaffordable, unsafe, or inadequate transportation options that restrict their ability to access daily needs, opportunities, and participate fully in society. Transport poverty can include issues related to accessibility, affordability, time burdens, mobility constraints, and exposure to environmental or safety harms.

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