Thinking outside the box to integrate equity into transportation planning efforts in the Greater Chattanooga region

Reflecting on an MPO’s evolving approach to meeting the intent of planning requirements related to transportation equity
AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Why equity matters at the MPO scale
3. Past equity work
4. Current equity work
5. Key takeaways for planners
6. Q & A
Metropolitan Planning Organizations & Regional Planning

- What is an MPO?
- Regional planning, often as an intermediary
- Long range (20+ years) plans
How & Why Equity Matters at this Scale

- Key decisions occur at the regional scale that affect how federal transportation funds are implemented, which directly impacts the built environment and how people travel.

- Investments reflect values, and most funding for transportation improvements flows through the MPO process.

- Regional, long-range planning offers a unique perspective.

- Without an equity lens, these decisions can have inequitable benefits and burdens to people throughout the region.
Past Incorporation of Equity into Transportation Plans

- Alignment with regulations - equity approach framed as requirement of the process
- Primarily retrospective look
- Disjointed analysis: Identify current needs then map proposed projects alongside environmental justice populations

> In addition to identifying current needs for disadvantaged populations as they relate to the areas outlined above, the proposed investments for the 2040 RTP were mapped against environment justice areas to assess Plan impacts on these communities (Figures 9.10-9.12). Note that the definition of “disadvantaged” for the environmental justice analysis was refined to focus on low income and minority populations only. Elderly populations were removed from the analysis given the large portions of the region with elderly population. This enabled a more refined assessment of Plan impacts on environmental justice communities, in particular, low income and minority populations. Results of the environmental justice analysis indicate:

2040 CHCNGA TPO Regional Transportation Plan, p. 176
Evolving Approach

2040 Plan
- Equity-related issues primarily framed through MPO planning requirements
- Plan goal language does not incorporate equity
- Plan shows equity-related census data over proposed projects for EJ analysis
- Plan incorporates one project evaluation measure tied to equity areas

2045 Plan

2050 Plan
- Plan identifies equity emphasis areas as one of first tasks
- Plan shows equity-related census data over existing conditions to identify needs
- Plan incorporates multiple project evaluation measures tied to equity areas
- Plan incorporates equity analysis into other plan analyses
- Equity incorporated into project and plan level evaluation
- Plan vision, goals, and objective language incorporates equity
- Equity framed as central goal of the planning process
2050 Regional Transportation Plan

Get involved!

Welcome! The 2050 RTP relies on robust public engagement in order to produce an investment plan that reflects goals and priorities from all sectors of our community. We know that some of this stuff is jargon-heavy and difficult to understand at times, and we’re committed to making sure the process is easy to navigate, accessible, interesting, and meaningful for everyone involved.

If you have thoughts on ways we can improve, or if you prefer to learn through dialogue and would like to schedule a time to chat with someone from our team about what this plan means, reach out to us at any time at rtp@chattanooga.gov!

Current Call to Action

Throughout the planning process, there will be different surveys, activities, and more that we need your input on! Rest assured that you can always come to this page and see the most current input opportunities featured here.

- (NEW) Take the survey on transportation investment priorities
- Help identify community resources in the region
- Share your thoughts on the RTP’s Equity Emphasis Areas

https://2050rtp-chcrpa.hub.arcgis.com/
What We’re Doing Now

2050 RTP approach to equity

- Community Advisory Committee
- Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs)
- Level of Traffic Stress for Bicyclists and Pedestrians
- Improving Access to Community Resources
- Transit and Multimodal Potential Areas
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Opportunity Areas
- Project identification
- Project-level evaluation
- Plan-level evaluation
Equity Emphasis Areas

- Low-income households
- Zero-vehicle households
- Low-English proficiency households
- Households with a disability present
- Individuals of Hispanic and/or Latin American ethnicity
- Individuals of Black, Asian, Native American, and other minority (non-white) races
- Adults 25+ with low educational attainment (less than a high school diploma)
- Older adults age 65+
- Children and youth under age 18
- Public input
Equity Emphasis Areas for Transportation Investments

Mapping traditionally underserved communities in the Chattanooga TPO area

Caroline Daigle | January 26, 2021

https://arcgis/XS44u
This is a survey form to collect public contributions to the dataset of Equity Emphasis Areas that will be used in RTP project evaluation. If you haven’t yet, click here to review the RTP Story Map that explains more about this work. If you don’t want to use the mapping tool, feel free to email your thoughts about a community or neighborhood that should be identified as an equity emphasis area to rtp@chattanoog.gov.

Draw the neighborhood or community that you want to identify as an equity emphasis area.

Drag your mouse to navigate the map, and use the +/- buttons in the top left corner to zoom in and out. When you are ready to draw an area, click the polygon shaped icon in the top right corner and start your drawing. When you are done, double click to close the edges. If you need to erase and restart your drawing, click the trashcan icon in the top right corner that appears after you start drawing.

Which population(s) are concentrated in this area?

- Low income households
- Households with disabilities present
- Older adults 65+
- Children and youth 0-17
- Black, Asian, or other racial minorities
- Hispanic/Latino individuals
- Zero vehicle households
- Adults age 26+ with low educational attainment

What else do you want us to know about this area?

Need help using the mapping tool? Click here for a video tutorial.

Share your thoughts!

These maps of demographic data are a good starting point for identifying equity emphasis areas for the 2050 RTP. They tell us which census block groups, relative to the entire TPO area, have particularly high concentrations of one or more populations described above. But we know looking at census data alone doesn’t tell the whole story. Help us make sure our plan rewards all transportation projects that benefit disadvantaged and historically underserved communities by adding any missing equity emphasis areas using the form below.
Level of Traffic Stress for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

- Identifying high stress areas for walking and biking
  - Speed limit
  - Number of lanes
  - Functional classification
Level of Traffic Stress for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

- Public input opportunity
- Special consideration for vision-impaired pedestrians who are especially vulnerable
Improving Access to Community Resources

- Re-evaluated & updated definition of community resources
- Public input opportunity
Transit and Equity Emphasis Areas

- Drawing connection between transit access and access to opportunities
- Extra attention on areas with biggest potential for impact: *Multimodal potential areas*
  - Planned moderate and high frequency transit routes
  - Walk/bike sheds
- Transit access in Equity Emphasis Areas
EV Opportunity Areas

- Identified existing EV charging inventory by type
- Established four criteria for EV charging opportunity areas
  - Alternative fuel corridors
  - Accessibility justice to EV charging
  - Points of interest
  - Multifamily buildings and office buildings
- Incorporated public input obtained via story map
Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Identification of Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Opportunity Areas

https://arcgis/m9r9j
Project Identification

- EV charging infrastructure
- Community resources
- Level of traffic stress
- Transit stop amenities analysis, travel sheds, mobility options & access
Project-Level Evaluation Metrics

“Project improves infrastructure conditions within an Equity Emphasis Area”

Bridge or pavement maintenance project within an EEA

“Project improves multimodal access options and experiences between transit (bus stops) or community resources and EEAs”

Bike, ped or transit project connecting equity emphasis area to a community resource

- Project limits within equity emphasis area and within ½ mile walk shed or 3 mile bike shed of a community resource (bike and ped projects must connect to the community resource directly or via existing infrastructure without documented gaps)

OR bike or ped project connecting equity emphasis area to transit,

- Project limits within equity emphasis area and within ½ mile walk shed or 3 mile bike shed of bus stop; must connect to bus stop directly or via existing infrastructure without documented gaps
Plan-Level Evaluation & Performance Monitoring

Plan-Level Evaluation

- “Number of Proposed Projects Benefiting Equity Emphasis Areas”
- “Percent of Population and Jobs with Transit Access (Hi/Low Frequency)”

Performance Monitoring

- Federally required PM 1, 2, & 3 performance measures
- Transit Asset Management and State of Good Repair performance measures
- Congestion Management Plan performance measures
Coordinated Plan Applications

Translating the RTP long range vision into shorter term investments

Projects implemented:

- Accessible vehicle purchases for transit providers & nonprofit agencies
- Funding for volunteer driver program
- ADA sidewalk improvements at transit stops with high ridership from individuals with disabilities/older adults
- Orientation/mobility training on sidewalks & transit for individuals with vision impairment
- Contracts for nonprofit agencies to provide transit services to clients
Key Takeaways for Planners

- Think beyond the requirements towards the **spirit of the regulations**, and learn to see where there is flexibility: often in more places than we realize
- Incorporate a view towards furthering equity from the very **beginning** of a planning process rather than retrospectively
- Consider what you don’t know and **what technical analysis can’t tell you**
  - Census data sources and approach for EEAs
- Be willing to let your approach **evolve**
- Provide opportunities to engage those that do not have home internet access
  - Use **public libraries** and provide instructions for accessing & using virtual materials
Key Takeaways for Planners (Cont.)

- Consider **anti-displacement strategies**
  - Community benefits agreements (CBAs), community land trusts (CLTs), property tax assistance, home repair assistance, etc.

- Putting equity lens on the front end and **thinking outside the boundaries of the specific plan**
  - Coordinate with other implementers to ensure that the **intent** of projects is being met across the board
Contact

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