Transportation Equity Framework 2023

Appendix

VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

VAPDA Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies

Report Title:

Vermont Transportation Equity Framework - Appendix

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Report Prepared for:

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APPENDIX A. EQUITY PROCESSES WITHIN THE AGENCY AND PARTNERS....A-1
1.1 AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION....A-3
1.1.1 ACCURATE REPRESENTATION OF THE POPULATION....A-3
1.1.2 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING....A-4
1.1.3 NEEDS ANALYSIS....A-4
1.1.4 SERVICE PROVISION....A-5
1.1.5 PRIORITIZATION PROCESS....A-6
1.1.6 ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT....A-7
1.2 DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES....A-7
1.3 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS....A-8
1.3.1 ACCURATE REPRESENTATION OF THE POPULATION....A-9
1.3.2 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING....A-9
1.3.3 NEEDS ANALYSIS....A-10
1.3.4 SERVICE PROVISION....A-11
1.3.5 PRIORITIZATION PROCESS....A-11
1.3.6 ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT....A-12
APPENDIX B. TECHNICAL APPENDIX: EQUITY, DATA, AND POLICY....B-1
1.4 SOCIAL EQUITY....B-1
1.5 VERMONT SPECIFIC NON-TRANSPORTATION MAPPING....B-2
1.6 NATIONAL SPATIAL DATA TOOLS....B-4
1.7 OTHER SAMPLE REPORTS....B-4
1.7.1 VERMONT REPORTS....B-4
1.7.2 ILLUSTRATIVE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING EQUITY INTO PLANNING....B-5
1.8 FOUNDATIONAL NATIONAL EFFORTS....B-8
1.8.1 FOUNDATIONAL POLICY....B-8
1.8.1 GUIDANCE AND SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES....B-15
APPENDIX C. TASK 4: GAP AND NEEDS ANALYSIS....C-1
1.9 TASK 4 FRAMEWORK....C-1
1.10 PILLAR 1 DISTRIBUTIVE EQUITY: ACCURATE POPULATION REPRESENTATION....C-2
1.11 PILLAR 2 PROCEDURAL EQUITY: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING....C-6
1.12 PILLAR 3 CONTEXTUAL EQUITY: NEEDS ANALYSIS....C-12
1.13 PILLAR 3 CONTEXTUAL EQUITY: SERVICE PROVISION....C-17
1.14 PILLAR 4 CORRECTIVE EQUITY: PRIORITIZATION PROCESS....C-21
1.15 PILLAR 4 CORRECTIVE EQUITY: ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT....C-25
APPENDIX D. QUICK TIPS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT....D-1
APPENDIX E. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES....E-1
APPENDIX F. DESCRIPTIONS OF KEY VERMONT DOCUMENTS....F-1
ENDNOTES....A

APPENDIX A. EQUITY PROCESSES WITHIN THE AGENCY AND PARTNERS

Vermont Agency of Transportation

The Agency of Transportation (AOT) is responsible for planning, developing, implementing, and maintaining transportation infrastructure, including but not limited to roads, bridges, state-owned railroads, airports, park and ride facilities, bicycle facilities, pedestrian paths, rail trails, public transportation facilities, and services. The AOT is the statewide Vermont agency responsible for administering and facilitating grants and financial support for many transportation entities in Vermont including public transit services, rail, and aviation. The AOT has more than 1,300 employees organized in four divisions: Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development; Finance and Administration; Highway; and District Maintenance and Fleet.

The AOT interacts with all state agencies, agencies with the United States Department of Transportation, and other federal agencies, numerous regional and state governments, international jurisdictions and cross-border organizations, local governments, transit agencies, airports, railroads, and the other private and non-profit entities engaged in transportation-related activities.

Department of Motor Vehicles

The Department of Motor Vehicles is housed within the AOT. The Department of Motor Vehicles is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the state's motor vehicle laws and regulations. In this capacity, it serves the motoring public through driver licensing, vehicle registration, tax collecting, enforcement, and educational activities.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must comply with the same regulations that the AOT does including Title VI. For FY 2022, the AOT released the *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Title VI Program Compliance Plan*, which provides information on the current DMV activities to ensure that "no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low-income or LEP, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity". Through this program, the DMV has developed programs and communication methods for those with hearing or speaking disabilities, non-English or non-verbal speakers, such as integration of UbiDuo machines and the Visor Card program.[1] An additional accessibility measure beyond the Title VI program is the increased DMV services available online through myDMV, mail, and town clerks. The DMV website along with all State of Vermont websites have adopted *W3C Accessibility Initiative* guidelines to provide a better online experience for those with disabilities.

The DMV has a robust Title VI training program that furthers the core training offered throughout the AOT. DMV staff receive additional refresher Title VI training including multicultural awareness and LEP topics. Attendees are shown

where all DMV's Title VI information is located on DMV website and where/how a person can file a complaint.

The DMV's existing resources and experience with disseminating information in multiple formats makes them a key agency for implementing Pillar 3 (Contextual Equity, Needs Analysis and Service Provision).

Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies

The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) is the statewide association for the State of Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs). RPCs are political subdivisions of the State created by their member municipalities (24 VSA §4341). RPCs provide technical assistance to municipalities, and since Vermont does not have county governments, RPCs act as a link between municipal affairs and state government. RPCs work in fields that directly and indirectly affect the public at large: land use, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental quality, and more.

There are 11 RPCs in Vermont, that includes the CCRPC (which has additional responsibilities as a Metropolitan Planning Organization). Each RPC must remain compliant with Title VI, EJ, LEP and other federal laws and executive orders that also pertain to the AOT. Each RPC has a Title VI plan that is reviewed and approved by the AOT.

The core activities of RPCs include:

- Municipal planning and implementation: Municipal plans, bylaws and ordinances.
- Regional planning: Comprehensive regional plans and related studies.
- Economic and community development: Grant support, plan for and support critical infrastructure to achieve economic and social goals.
- Transportation planning: Data collection, performance measures and assessment, stormwater, culverts and bridges, and land use planning. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support the local, regional, state, and federal networks.
- Brownfields: Environmental site assessments and remediation planning.
- Emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency: Regional partners to the VT Emergency Management, develop local Emergency Management Plans, update floodplain and river corridors and FEMA hazard mitigation plans.
- Watershed planning and project development: Water quality and the implementors of the Municipal Roads Grant-in-Aid Program funded by the AOT.
- Energy conservation and development: Energy resources and conservation is integrated with land use, transportation and natural resource planning in the comprehensive planning process.
- Data management and geographic information systems services: Mapping and data analysis for municipal, state, and private entities.

Within these numerous and varied responsibilities, the RPCs have the important authority of being delegated by the AOT to

serve as the regional representatives informing the needs and priorities of transportation investments in their region. RPCs are one of the main points of contact with the public, have strong knowledge of their local communities. Given their local insight for data gathering and community feedback, RPCs are key for implementing Pillar 1 (Distributive Equity, Accurate Population Representation), Pillar 2 (Procedural Equity, Equitable Access to Decision Making), and Pillar 3 (Contextual Equity, Needs Analysis and Service Provision).

1.1 AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

The AOT has four divisions with several Bureaus that carry out the day-to-day activities of managing the transportation system. The pillars of equity have been embedded throughout the AOT to varying degrees based on the division and the work being performed. Different divisions in the AOT will have different tasks to meet the Equity Framework recommendations, such as AOT Planning and efforts to improve data accuracy and population representation, or the AOT Office of Civil Rights in improving access to service materials, public meetings, and events. The AOT will play a significant role integrating equity into project planning through all pillars, developing procedures and considerations for equity data collection, and providing guidance to other agencies on equity considerations and processes.

1.1.1 Accurate Representation of the Population

There is no definitive resource that is used across the Bureaus and groups within the AOT that helps identify the true diversity of the population and any underrepresented groups or people, but there are several related guidelines that can be used. For example, the *Federal Highway Administration Title VI Program Implementation Plan* that was released September 2023 specifies resources and tools to identify protected classes and communities with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).[2] Accompanied in that document are several checklists to be used by the different agency groups with questions regarding efforts made to identify low-income and minority communities. Also related to the Title VI regulations is the *Subrecipient Data Collection Tool Kit,* which clarifies that any subrecipient receiving federal or AOT assistance is required to collect and analyze data of the participants and beneficiaries of the program. Title VI documents are useful for covering discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, but it does not cover all aspects of equity. The Title VI office maintains mapping showing what portion of the census tract, town or county population is identified as LEP or exhibiting characteristics protected by Title VI and EJ.

A resource available outside of the Title VI documents is the Equity Impact Worksheet in the *VTrans Public Involvement Guide*, which contains resources about where population data can be pulled such as the American Community Survey (ACS), Community Action Agencies, and the ECOS Map Viewer (Chittenden County).[3] A challenge not unique to

Vermont is finding a common source that can remain current and avoid static maps which can become stale.

The AOT Title VI office has provided resources to define and express how the focus communities are to be defined and contribute to planning processes, however, a standardized methodology or process has not been established or narrated. Project specific EJ analyses are agreed to by project sponsors and federal agencies.

1.1.2 Equitable Access to Decision Making

Similar to the steps for getting an accurate population representation, the AOT doesn't have specific guidelines for ensuring equitable access during the decision-making process. However, there are resources available about techniques for engaging stakeholders and improving public outreach efforts.

The *VTrans Public Involvement Guide* and the *VTrans Project Definition Process Guidebook,* both released in 2017, encourage stakeholder participation early in the project planning process and provide resources for different methods of outreach to encourage disadvantaged populations participation. Resources include planning strategies, meeting best practices, media tactics, and other outreach tools. Another AOT resource for improving access is the VTransparency website (https://vtransparency.vermont.gov/) where current and planned construction projects are displayed along with a contact phone number and email.

Opportunities may exist to improve the connection and education of the public between individual projects, planning efforts, and funding decisions to inform where and how decisions are made and by whom.

The Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) was created to build a direct link between the public and the state agencies conducting planning work. Per the federal Map-21 transportation bill, municipalities and regional entities are expected to cooperate with state agencies. The TPI codified the mechanism by which the AOT coordinates policy development and planning through the RPCs to ensure involvement by Vermont citizens and rural local officials.

1.1.3 Needs Analysis

Needs are identified through the continuous project planning cycle. Some needs are acute and arise from changes in the environment, safety, or rapid changes in a community. Other needs are identified through proactive planning initiatives such as corridor plans, modal plans and regional long range plans. As stated in the current project prioritization process, the AOT and partner RPCs identify potential new projects by one of three means: 1) AOT asset management systems; 2) Identified safety needs; and 3) Projects funded through various grant processes.

Federal guidance informs much of the proactive planning work. The day-to-day planning revolves around providing solutions when performance measures are expected to fall into unacceptable ranges. Figure 1 shows the federal performance measures monitored and agreed to with FHWA for the AOT.

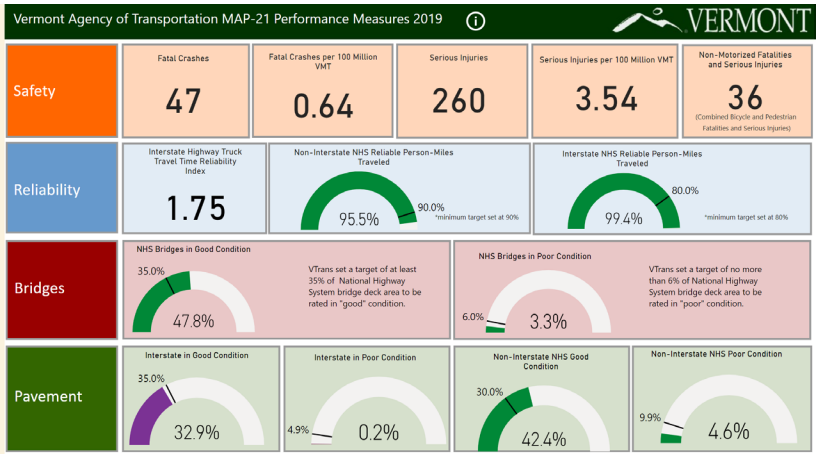
Other needs arise as part of an existing project, which might uncover additional investments that may be necessary either as mitigation or as a complementary investment to achieve the full value of the primary investment.

Community meetings and public input are another key source of identifying investment needs. Most public input is routed through the RPCs as the local partner to the AOT on many projects. EJ may influence the scale and types of needs, particularly when EJ impacts warrant changes in the original project design and configuration.

Opportunities exist to better account for equity and EJ in proactive planning as several of the plans don't include the terms equity or EJ in them. The current AOT Long Range Plan published in 2018 does not account for equity or environmental justice. The Public Transit Policy Plan mentions equity in the context of fares as well as equitable health outcomes.

The AOT performance measures themselves are not publicly available across different dimensions, such as regionally or by social or economic characteristics of the population.

FIGURE 1: FHWA MAP-21 PERFORMANCE MEASURES



Source: https://vtransparency.vermont.gov/pages/fhwa-performance

Within the AOT, like most other DOTs, the current consideration of equity in the needs of investments appears to be quite limited.

1.1.4 Service Provision

Since the AOT is a recipient of federal funds, all receipts and the agency's services must comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and operate without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low-income status, or limited English proficiency. Therefore, guidance has been established to help AOT services comply with this law within the *Federal Highway Administration Title VI Program*. Title VI roles and responsibilities are broken up by AOT divisions. The document clarifies what each division is responsible for their services to comply with Title VI. A responsibility example is the Highway Division must monitor contractor activities to prevent discrimination and adverse impacts on the community. These

responsibilities are focused on Title VI compliance and not necessarily equity. Additional tools for compliance as well as strategies for equitable and accessible communication are provided within the *VTrans Public Involvement Guide.*

Equitable service provision in the AOT context is also paramount for transit service provision. The FTA Title VI reports are a key measure of the effort and attention that has been placed to remain in compliance but also make a good faith effort toward recognizing the needs of disadvantaged communities and populations identified by Title VI and LEP.

1.1.5 Prioritization Process

The resource primarily used for project prioritization annually is the VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization Process (VPSP2). The program is how projects are prioritized and how funds are allocated within the AOT Highway Division Capital Program. These projects can range from resurfacing pavement to new or improved bike and pedestrian facilities. The evaluation criteria include safety, asset condition, mobility and connectivity, economic access, resiliency, regional community, environment, and health access. The categories like mobility and economic access within the criteria help prioritize the needs for community versus based strictly on asset condition. However, the prioritization process does not state equity or a process for identifying underrepresented communities and their needs.

In the near term, expanding reliable and multimodal access to jobs can become an entry point to account for equity immediately in the prioritization process. Other DOTs have considered access to jobs a key criteria for equity – by improving safe, multimodal, cost effective access to jobs, social and economic outcomes can be improved. The AOT has incorporated paving, roadway, traffic and safety, and bridge programs into VPSP2 during the two-year pilot of the system over 2021/2022. Opportunities to expand the criteria within VPSP2 to explicitly account for equitable outcomes using some of the guidance from the 2020 NASEM report[29] could be considered. Similar to the performance measures that could be used to establish needs, there are opportunities to create dimensions of the evaluation criteria which can identify how benefits accrue to specific communities. Additionally, it is possible to use aspects of the VPSP2 to inform investment priorities beyond the Highway Division such as prioritizing specific transit or active modal investments to improve multimodal access to jobs and other priority destinations.

Once the project is underway, the Local & Regional Input Questionnaire, within the *VTrans Public Involvement Guide,* is used to identify what community factors may affect a project and should be considered throughout the construction phase. The questionnaire addresses school routes, pedestrian and bicyclist volumes, and potential business that may be adversely impacted. This process could mitigate or identify some of the impacts marginalized groups may face, but equity is not specifically mentioned. Additionally, many projects include a Local Concerns meeting held early in the process to identify and uncover issues.

1.1.6 Ongoing Performance Management

Once any investment has been made there are opportunities to assess and evaluate how that investment has achieved its intended purpose. The federal and state regulations set out several expectations that do pertain to equity, and Title VI and LEP address compliance specifically. The Civil Rights office prepares the FMCA, FTA, and FHWA Civil Rights Title VI and LEP compliance reports.

The AOT has a Civil Rights office and has appointed Title VI liaisons to provide technical advice, maintain statistical data by race, color and national origin, conduct reviews, and investigate complaints. Also, each year the liaison is responsible for providing a Division and Department Title VI report to the coordinator with any additional needs and patterns of non-compliance. This helps ensure nondiscrimination action and continuous performance management within the different divisions and subrecipients, but it is focused on Title VI requirements and not specifically ensuring equity.

Beyond the requirements set out regarding Title VI and LEP it is not clear how on-going performance management and evaluation occurs on project investments, routine investments and maintenance, as well as planning regarding equity or EJ.

Internally, the Civil Rights office also monitors procurement (e.g., DBE), hiring, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities within the entire AOT (including DMV). The Civil Rights office also conducts Title VI and LEP specific training that includes: new employee welcome, new supervision orientation and training, a leadership institute, and a pathway to supervision training. These trainings include AOT and DMV staff.

1.2 DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must comply with the same regulations that the AOT does including Title VI. For FY 2022, the AOT released the *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Title VI Program Compliance Plan*, which provides information on the current DMV activities to ensure that “no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low-income or LEP, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity". Through this program in FY21, the DMV acquired the UbiDuo Wireless Face-to-Face Communication Machines for all eleven DMV locations to effectively communicate for those with a hearing or speaking disability while adhering to the Driver Privacy Protection Act. In addition to this, DMV locations provide interpretation for freight, non-English languages through a phone service, and American Sign Language (ASL) both in-person and through video call for no additional cost.

In addition to the UbiDuo communication machines, the Title VI Program Compliance Plan created the Visor Card program. The Visor Cards are for the deaf or hard of hearing population and the Vermont State Police to effectively communicate with each other. Visor Cards are available through DMV branch locations or an online application form. Other improvements recognized in this plan are a gender-neutral option for driver’s

licenses. No information is required to specify the gender on DMV forms, either M, F, or X.

The *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Title VI Program Compliance Plan* also provides a compliant form and additional Title VI program training for employees to help with ongoing management. While the Title VI program does not explicitly state equity, some of the resulting programs like those mentioned above have improved equity within the development and delivery of DMV services.

An additional accessibility measure beyond the Title VI program is the increased DMV services available online through myDMV, mail, and town clerks. This provides additional options for those who are unable to access a DMV branch location easily or who find an online process easier than an in-person experience. The DMV website along with all State of Vermont websites have adopted *W3C Accessibility Initiative* guidelines to provide a better online experience for those with disabilities.

The DMV is prohibited from retaining copies of birth certificates, passports, and other sensitive information of applicants for Driver's Privilege Cards, except in cases of a name change. In addition, no information is required to specify the gender on DMV forms, either M, F, or X.

The DMV has a robust Title VI training program that furthers the core training offered throughout the AOT. DMV staff receive additional refresher Title VI training including multicultural awareness and LEP topics. The most recent training focused on how DMV will ensure that staff understands how their activities impact different population segments. Uniformed DMV staff also participate in specific Fair and Impartial Policing Policy.

DMV will ensure that staff understand how their activities impact different population segments. Attendees are shown where all DMV's Title VI information is located on DMV website and where/how a person can file a complaint.

1.3 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS

The state has 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) that includes the CCRPC (which has additional responsibilities as a Metropolitan Planning Organization or MPO). Each RPC must remain compliant with Title VI, EJ, LEP and other federal laws and executive orders that also pertain to the AOT. Each RPC has a Title VI plan that is reviewed and approved by the AOT.

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- Brownfields: Environmental site assessments and remediation planning.
- Emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency: Regional partners to the VT Emergency Management, develop local Emergency Management Plans, update floodplain and river corridors and FEMA hazard mitigation plans.
- Watershed planning and project development: Water quality and the implementors of the Municipal Roads Grant-in-Aid Program funded by the AOT.
- Energy conservation and development: Energy resources and conservation is integrated with land use, transportation and natural resource planning in the comprehensive planning process.
- Data management and geographic information systems services: Mapping and data analysis for municipal, state, and private entities.

Within these numerous and varied responsibilities, the RPCs have the important authority of being delegated by the AOT to serve as the regional representatives informing the needs and priorities of transportation investments in their region.

1.3.1 Accurate Representation of the Population

The RPCs generally rely on the same materials as the state, including referring to publicly available census data. The CCRPC developed a supplemental *Equity Impact Worksheet* to their *Public Participation Plan* guidance.[4] Similar to the *VTrans Public Involvement Guide*, the ACS, the CCRPC ECOS Map Viewer, and public website Community Commons are identified for who may be impacted by the planning effort. The Equity Worksheet notes that regional, municipal, and department data and any other sources of relevant data shall be considered. RPCs may leverage the experience and proximity to the community to have an accurate sense of the disadvantaged or priority communities within the region. There is an opportunity for the RPCs to establish a consistent means of communicating this awareness to the AOT, to partners and other stakeholders. For example, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) has started to involve the state recognized Abenaki of the Missisquoi in planning efforts. This is one limited example of intentional engagement with a local population that has limited recognition in national publicly available data sources.

1.3.2 Equitable Access to Decision Making

RPCs offer the general public a greater degree of access to the many processes and activities of the RPC compared to the AOT. As the regional partners of the AOT (as codified in the TPI[5] per 19 V.S.A section 101), RPCs have numerous boards and commissions which are often appointed by the member towns. The structure places the RPCs at the point of interface with the general public and community. RPCs may also have topic area committees with membership structure varying.

RPC Boards or Commissioners often have the final vote for adopting policies or selecting the investments that are recommended for AOT consideration. Although the meetings are open to the public there are varying levels of focus and

effort to select times and locations that are accessible to a wide audience.

Some RPCs (e.g., NRPC, CCRPC) have started providing a stipend for members of the public to participate in public engagement activities.[6] The stipends are a recognition of the value of the information being provided but also time and real out-of-pocket costs that some participants incur. The stipends are a relatively new way to recognize the burdens associated with participating in committees, boards, and any other broad planning engagement activity.

Stipends and other forms of compensation for the information and engagement time does count as income. This has been identified as a concern for some participants where their involvement is valued, but due to the criteria associated with some assistance programs, this income can jeopardize and complicate participation. There are opportunities for the RPCs and all other partners to become more aware of these challenges, but also the value of recognizing the costs and value that participants bring.

While ensuring equitable participating in the process is essential, it is only a start. An equitable access throughout the decision making process requires additional intentional engagement and effort. It isn't evident that there are policies to define and achieve equitable access to decision making.

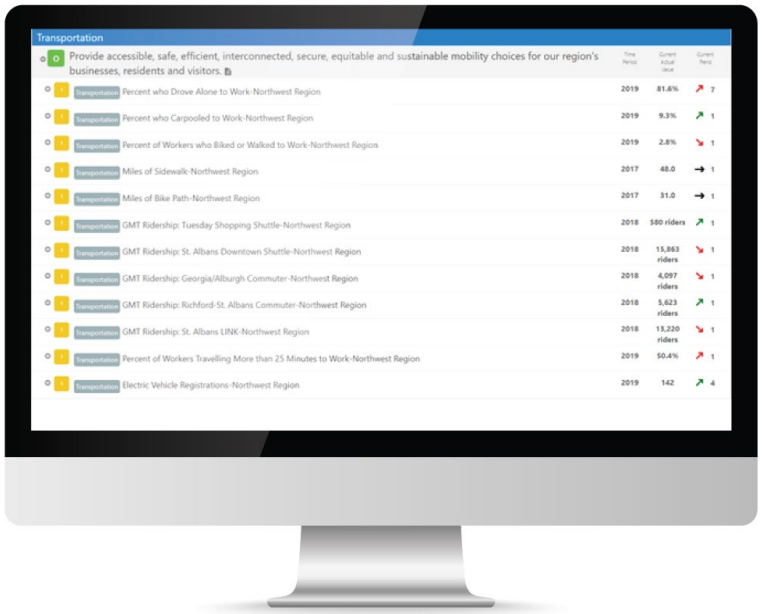
1.3.3 Needs Analysis

Investment needs arise throughout the day-to-day activities of the RPC as well as through proactive long range planning activities. As the regional partner to the AOT, the RPCs identify and prioritize the majority of investment needs, which are then communicated and agreed to with the AOT and other partners.

Within the RPCs, equity has not been a driving force in the identification of needs, although several RPCs do have the term in their long range plans (e.g., CCRPC, CVRPC). Needs have been identified using goals that may also support equitable outcomes but haven't yet recognized the term individually. Performance measures aside from equity are most often guidance to establish priorities and needs. In March 2022, the Bennington County RPC published a scoping study (Trolley Line) that does account for social equity through a health lens as a benefit to the project, although there is limited guidance as to how that benefit to the project supports wider regional wide equity goals.[7]

Needs are often derived from reviewing dashboards. Figure 2 is an example dashboard from NRPC that sets out twelve transportation measures that support the region's transportation goal.

FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE DASHBOARD



1.3.4 Service Provision

The RPCs carry out an extensive list of programs and services. Equity deserves to be clearly defined and included in the methods by which the RPCs conduct their business. While each RPC has a Title VI plan that is agreed with the AOT, the plan defines the minimum expectations for how equity can be considered in the day-to-day work.

RPCs can serve as regional resources to assist communities which may have insufficient or inadequate resources compared to larger and better resourced communities. For example, RPCs can assist with completing grant applications as well as assisting with project management for AOT/Municipal projects.

1.3.5 Prioritization Process

RPCs prioritize the capital investments within each region of the state through the agreement of shared and delegated jurisdiction with the AOT. As part of this agreement the RPCs also use the VPSP2 process to evaluate and assign a Transportation Value for projects identified by the RPC. The AOT provides resources to help calculate the score across the VPSP2 criteria and the weighting of each criterion.

RPCs have the opportunity to comment on the suitability and priority of existing identified projects as well as use the VPSP2 process to score new potential investments. The shared responsibility between the AOT and the RPCs attempts to delegate analysis of criteria that benefit the most from local knowledge, such as economic access (noted above as one frequently used metric often considered related to equity), health access, and regional/community.

The VPSP2 process does not explicitly account for equity in the criteria. The RPCs can manually attempt to include some measure of equity through the criteria that are delegated to them. However, a key benefit attributed to the VPSP2 process is the consistency and stability across the state in prioritizing investments.

1.3.6 Ongoing Performance Management

In any planning efforts including town and municipal plans and regional long range plans, RPCs are influential in setting performance measures which can be used to track how well the local and regional goals are being realized. As noted above, some RPCs have existing dashboards that can document progress toward achieving regional goals.

It is evident that the regional goals need to be aligned with the priorities included in VPSP2 if capital investments are required.

Opportunities abound for greater clarity on how equity can be measured across the six pillars. Only by measuring and evaluating will progress be made and the equitable outcomes achieved.

APPENDIX B. TECHNICAL APPENDIX: EQUITY, DATA, AND POLICY

1.4 SOCIAL EQUITY

Those Vermont communities that have been historically marginalized, underserved, or overburdened are being denied full access to the liberties and benefits that others enjoy. Many of these past harms continue to affect the lives of many individuals and communities today. We recognize that social equity can be applied to the following groups:

- Race/Ethnicity (Black or African-American, Brown, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous communities and Native nations)
- Ethnic backgrounds
- Indigenous and Original Peoples of Vermont
- LGTBQIAP+ individuals
- Limited English-speaking households
- Living with disabilities or chronically ill people
- Older (65+) population
- Unemployed
- Single-Mother households
- Zero-vehicle households
- People without housing
- People living with low or very low incomes
- Justice involved individuals
- Immigrants, regardless of immigration status
- Refugees
- Young people
- Women

While labels are imprecise, inaccurate, and cannot encompass the lived experiences of individuals, they can provide value in a shared understanding in working toward solutions. We cannot evaluate or change what we don't define and what we do not measure.

The communities identified will continue to change. This list is not static and intended to only be a guide to help inform how to evaluate, measure, and improve equitable and just outcomes.

A sampling of these surveys and datasets can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1: NATIONAL SURVEY DATASETS PRODUCED BY US CENSUS BUREAU

SURVEY/ DATASET	DATA DESCRIPTION	DATA SOURCE	RELEASE FREQUENCY	UPDATES
American Community Survey (ACS)[8]	National survey that provides population and demographic information at multiple geographic levels (down to the block level).	ACS Sampling	Annually	Geographic redistricting occurs decennially depending on demographic and population changes. Yearly updates can include new summary profiles of existing data.
Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS)[1]	Provides data from ACS for Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), non-overlapping areas that partition states into regions containing 100,000 residents.	ACS Data	Annually	Geographic boundaries updated decennially based on demographic and population changes.
Local Area Transportation Characteristics for Households (LATCH)[2]	Model produced by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) that develops average estimates of daily trips at the census tract level.	National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) and ACS Data[3]	Every 5 years	NHTS questions are added or removed every 5 years, and in 2017, changed from telephone-based sample to cellphone-based sample.
Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)[4]	Economic, demographic, and labor market information, including origin-destination employment statistics (LODES), available down to the census block group level[5].	Center for Economic Studies, US Census; Unemployment Insurance (UI) earnings data, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW),	Public use data sets and online tools produced at different intervals; O-D data updated at multi-year intervals	LEHD releases updates for new statistical product features quarterly, all data updates resulting from changes in UI, QCEW, census, and survey data.

[1] US Census Bureau. Accessing PUMS Data. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/microdata/access.html

[2] Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Local Area Transportation Characteristics for Households (LATCH). https://www.bts.gov/latch

[3] National Household Travel Survey (NHTS). https://nhts.ornl.gov/faq

[4] US Census Bureau. Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD). https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ces/data/restricted-use-data/lehd-data.html

[5] https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/#lodes

1.5 VERMONT SPECIFIC NON-TRANSPORTATION MAPPING

Vermont has several data and mapping resources that can be applied to inform equity processes through the project and planning cycle.

The AOT provides several data sources, maps, and visualization dashboards through the VTransparency public information portal at https://vtransparency.vermont.gov/. The portal includes information involving crashes, travel volume, maps, and specific modal information for highways and rail.

The AOT Civil Rights office has maintained a set of Title VI and LEP mapping that has supported federal modal Title VI plans. These static maps could be shifted to the VTransaprency site and maintained on an ArcGIS Online service to maintain current data, improve the functionality and resolution of the data, and potentially improve the value of the maps for planning and project development.

The Decolonial Science, Democracy & Just Futures Lab at the University of Vermont has created a Vermont Environmental Disparity Index (VTEDI) to identify communities that are most susceptible to environmental hazards and most vulnerable to the modifying effect of socioeconomic factors.[9] The index is based on exposure to environmental hazards and considers

the characteristics of the resident population (including underlying health risk factors and social vulnerability).

VT Environmental Disparity Index =

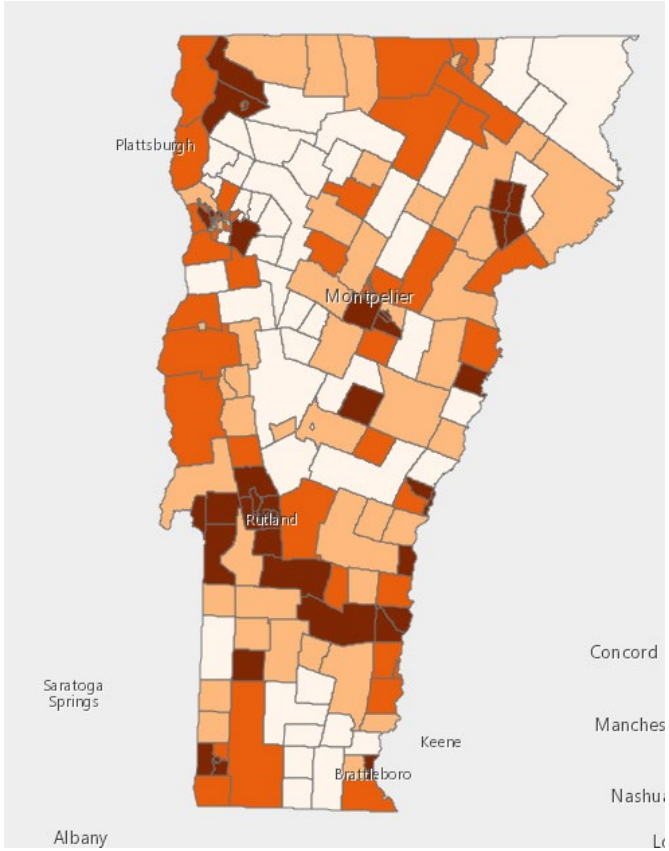
*Environmental Exposure * (Health Risk Factors * 0.5 + Social Vulnerability * 0.5)*

The index is an aggregate measure of several individual indicators at the census tract level. The score for each tract is compared to the percentile relative to the unit compared to all other areas of the state.

The aggregation has both positives as well as drawbacks. The positive aspect is that some communities and individuals face greater challenges when there is more than one negative factor present in the community. However, a drawback is that some of the measures are likely to be strongly correlated. For example, if there is a strong correlation between health and environmental risk factors, then that tract may be overly weighted and reducing the visibility other predictor variables in the map. Further challenges is the limited ability to distinguish between certain measures in the index – such as even if a waterway may have an environmental issue, are all users affected evenly? For example, individuals with higher incomes can shield themselves from the negative impacts of the environmental challenge vs those with lower incomes may be more susceptible to experiencing negative impacts from the environmental condition.

The index is an excellent local example of the type of index that could provide the partners with geographic-specific information on where to focus local efforts addressing current inequalities. Opportunities exist to enhance the index by filtering the data by social or economic characteristics of the population to determine the relationships that may be associated with particular outcomes.

FIGURE 3: VERMONT ENVIRONMENTAL DISPARITY INDEX



Source: Vermont Environmental Disparity Index[9]

1.6 NATIONAL SPATIAL DATA TOOLS

A sample of these national mapping tools are described below:

- *Opportunity Atlas:* A social mobility mapping tool that uses census data to estimate average economic outcomes for adults who were born between 1978 and 1983 by the census tract in which they grew up in. Estimates can be segmented by race, gender, and parental income level, and can be used by agencies as an indicator of changes in economic opportunity by geography.[10]
- *CNT H+T:* Provides interactive mapping as well as data down to the census block group that seeks to quantify the relative burden or affordability of combined housing and transportation costs. The transportation cost model is based on neighborhood characteristics, household characteristics, and modal opportunities.[11]
- *EJ Screen:* An EJ mapping and screening tool that uses a combination of census demographic data, and environmental data originating from the EPA, CDC, and national studies, to overlay environmental and demographic indicators by geography. The tool is used to identify EJ populations and assess potential disparate environmental impacts to these populations, in accordance with E.O. 12898, to create a nationally consistent tool for the EPA and public use. Depending on the indicator variable being mapped, information is available down to the block group or census tract level.[12]
- *National Equity Atlas:* A data hub for graphing and mapping equity data using indicator data derived from PolicyLink and USC's Equity Research Institute. Data is disaggregated by race, gender, nativity, ancestry, and income, down to the census tract level. The tool allows comparisons among regions and demographics and provides indices, such as the Racial Equity Index, which compiles indicators of racial and economic equity.[13]

1.7 OTHER SAMPLE REPORTS

1.7.1 Vermont Reports

Measuring Up: Examining performance reporting in the Vermont Annual Outcomes Report

Douglas Hoffer (Vermont State Auditor), January 24, 2022: This report documents an audit and review of the Vermont State government's Annual Outcomes Report. The report makes clear recommendations on how this annual reporting effort can be improved to better serve legislators. One of the recommendations to come out of the report was to disaggregate data, when appropriate, by income, region, gender, race, age, disability status etc. to inform policy discussions about the disparate and unintended inequitable impact of policies and programs and/or where to target resources. According to the report, Government Accountability Committee and Chief Performance Officer, in partnership with the Agency of Human Services, have identified indicators that would benefit from disaggregated data, with a focus on race and gender. Examples are given to highlight how

disaggregated data can provide a more nuanced picture of conditions in Vermont across groups, including looking at affordable housing by income cohorts and employment by disability type (pgs. 15 – 17).

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) Organizational Equity Assessment Report

The Creative Discourse Group (TCDG), December 22, 2021: This report was authored by the Creative Discourse Group (TCDG) to document their effort to support the CCRPC board and staff to build their capacity to address systemic racism and inequities in their internal and external work. During the initial phase of support, the TCDG worked with CCRPC leaders to establish an Internal CCRPC Equity Leadership Team. In addition, TCDG assessed CCRPC's current work, led several racial equity workshops for the CCRPC board and staff, gathered information about equity initiatives across the municipalities, and planned and facilitated the November 6, 2021 Planning for Equity Summit. The overall assessment revealed that the CCRPC are willing and motivated to embark on racial equity work but lack skill and confidence, in part because the people within the organization are mostly white and lack the lived experience of marginalized identities. The TCDG equity assessment offered three broad recommendations:

1. Center Equity, Inclusion, and Justice in every facet of the CCRPC's work.
2. Prioritize connections with diverse populations including People of the Global Majority and those who have been marginalized or underrepresented.
3. Leverage the CCRPC's authority, expertise, and resources to become a regional equity leader.

In order to accomplish these high level goals, the CCRPC will need to build internal infrastructure (hiring staff dedicated to equity work, and continuing to build its Equity Leadership Team), create opportunities for CCRPC staff to build ongoing relationships with underrepresented community members, increase investment in inclusive community engagement processes, and serve as a host and convener for both formal and informal Chittenden County leaders who are engaged with racial equity and economic justice work.

1.7.2 Illustrative Successful Practices for Integrating Equity into Planning

Example 1: Oregon I-5 and I-205 Toll Projects Equity Framework

The Oregon I-5 and I-205 Toll Project Equity Framework, published in December 2020 recognizes how historical transportation investments in Portland, Oregon have created adverse cultural, health, and economic effects to communities living in the area and resulted in displacement and segregation. The equity framework was developed in response to concerns about the disproportionate economic impact of tolls on low-income populations, the potential of increased traffic on local streets to avoid tolls, and the poor existing transit quality and lack of existing transportation options. The transportation goals of the toll projects were to reduce traffic congestion and to generate revenue to fund other congestion

relief projects. The framework included a 5-step process for achieving equitable outcomes (Figure 4), as described below[14]:

FIGURE 4: FIVE STEP PROCESS FOR ACHIEVING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

Source: TransForm[15]

Step 1: Identify Who/What/Where:

- Identify historically and currently excluded and underserved community members and businesses that may be impacted by the toll projects disproportionately and detrimentally. Understand and present the context of how and why these communities have been excluded and underserved through historical and current transportation and land use investment.
- Document travel patterns for communities that may be disproportionately impacted and anticipate changes in response. Propose a range of pricing strategies and policies that prioritize and address impacted communities' mobility.[16]

Step 2: Define Equity Outcomes and Performance Measures:

- Create performance measures to establish baseline conditions for historically and currently excluded and underserved communities and the impacts of pricing and policy proposals on these communities. Performance measures will address the following:

Process Equity: Inclusive and Accountable Participation:

- Include measures of participation for underserved communities participating in advisory committees, workshops, virtual meetings, and providing comments via public meetings and surveys.
- Develop evaluation measures of the toll program's responsiveness in addressing comments and concerns by underserved communities by collecting feedback from program events and incorporating needs into design and implementation decisions. Provide continuous monitoring for the project's adaptability based on community needs and resulting decision making and project management choices.

Outcome Equity: Affordability, Access to Opportunity, and Community Health

- In planning, design, and implementation, consider and address changes in travel costs and new or existing financial barriers that may limit toll use by underserved communities.
- Evaluate how potential changes to travel patterns, existing alternative transportation options, and time penalties on un-tolled alternatives produced from toll project may impact access to opportunities for underserved communities.
- Analyze community health indicators, environmental impacts, safety, community cohesion or isolation, and small business impacts that may result from the toll project and disproportionately impact underserved communities.[16]

Step 3: Determine Benefits and Burdens:

- Determine positive and negative impacts resulting from indicators identified in Step 2.
- Positive and negative impacts could include: user costs, travel choices, travel time, transit & other alternative choices, traffic patterns, businesses, noise, access to opportunity, and environmental and community health.[16]

Step 4: Choose Options that Advance Equity:

- Involve historically excluded and underserved communities in review of strategies and determine which strategies will benefit commuters and non-commuters in these communities the greatest.
- Prioritize strategies that provide increased affordability and price certainty. Refine pricing options with underserved communities.
- Model final strategy choices to provide more detailed prediction of impacts and greater transparency to underserved communities.[16]

Step 5: Provide Accountable Feedback and Evaluation:

- Create a timeline that incorporates continuous feedback from the public ensuring that the project meets the goals and commitments made to underserved communities.
- In developing mobility and mitigation strategies, highlight community priorities and incorporate feedback from underserved community members.
- Provide oversight of equity issues and include evaluation and adjustment opportunities throughout the design and implementation process.
- Identify any equity concerns that are not addressed by the toll projects and address these concerns clearly and transparently with underserved communities.[16]

The Oregon Toll Project's Equity Framework provides an outline for other state or regional planning agencies looking to better consider, measure, incorporate, and validate equity in the transportation planning, policy, and design processes. There is no one-size-fits-all approach that works for all planning agencies due to the differences in underserved community group needs, concerns, and historical and current relationship with transportation agencies. However, processes and considerations that ensure transparency, accountability,

communication, and validation by underserved community members is a framework that can better integrate these communities in the planning process and have more successful equity-based outcomes for these community members.

Example 2: Nashville RTP Equity Project Evaluation

Nashville has a scoresheet that quantifies the equity impacts of transportation infrastructure projects. The scoresheet has the following sections:

- **Vulnerable Populations**: Score of 9 possible with each category giving a point: senior adults, racial minorities, ethnic minority, single-mother households, unemployed, poverty, carless households, limited English households, disabled.
- **Usage**: Quantifies active transportation users (unclear if this is current or estimated usage).
- **Access**: Access rating (all projects have score of 2, unclear how this category is scored).
- **Mobility**: Score of 3 possible with each category giving a point: pedestrian accommodations, bicycle accommodations, transit accommodations.
- **Safety**: Score of 2 possible with each category giving a point: safety improvements, streetscaping.
- **Opportunities to Enhance**: Has the following categories: intersection improvements, manage access and speeds, transit improvements, consider multi-use path, add sidewalks/crosswalks, add streetscaping, significant outreach/engagement, need translator for engagement.

Nashville is continuing to refine their evaluation process. They overlay their nine population metrics with infrastructure and access metrics.

1.8 FOUNDATIONAL NATIONAL EFFORTS

1.8.1 Foundational Policy

For decades, the federal government has explicitly prohibited discrimination in work it oversees or funds. The passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 applied these prohibitions to recipients of federal funding through Title VI, which forbids intentional discrimination in regard to race, color, and national origin. The purpose of this law has been to ensure that federal funds are not being used by recipients for discriminatory purposes. In 1994, Executive Order 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” further directed all federal agencies to create their own EJ strategies.[17] These actions have increased the attention paid by federal agencies to the health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Title VI regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin for any program that USDOT oversees.[18] The agency is

also required to apply this requirement to state and local governments (or any other entity financially assisted by USDOT) by requiring recipients of funding to demonstrate compliance with Title VI. Most state DOTs have dedicated Title VI compliance programs to document and enforce compliance with Title VI among the agencies they oversee. USDOT defines discrimination within their Title VI program as follows:

> *Discrimination refers to any action or inaction, whether intentional of unintentional, in any program of a recipient of Federal financial assistance, the effect of which is that programmatic benefits and services are denied, excluded, or otherwise made unavailable based on race, color, or national origin; or such action or inaction has the effect of imposing artificial, arbitrary, and unnecessary barriers to the accomplishment of the objectives of the program or activity with respect to individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin.*

Because USDOT's definition of discrimination within their Title VI program encompasses both intentional and unintentional actions or inactions, recipients of funding from USDOT, including state DOTs and local governments, track and monitor the impact of their work on underrepresented groups. This allows agencies to gauge whether certain programs or projects have the effect of discriminating against these groups (even if that was not the intent).

E.O. 12898 was issued by President Clinton in 1994.[19] It directs federal agencies to focus on minority and low-income communities by examining the health and environmental effects of federal programs, policies, or activities in these areas. Specifically, it requires federal agencies to identify and address these effects, develop strategies to implementing EJ within their own agency and programs, and promote nondiscrimination in any federal program that affects the environment or the health of humans. Access to information and the ability to participate in the planning process is also emphasized as part of the order's directive to federal agencies.

E.O. 12898 differs from Title VI as it is not a law or statute. However, as the Department of Justice has noted, "*both [are] rooted in the same basic principle that no person should bear an unfair share of harm on account of their race, color or national origin"* (Department of Justice 2010). Because of the role that transportation plays in human health and the environment, there is significant overlap between Title VI and E.O. 12898. In 2011, federal agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898.[20] This MOU outlined strategies for federal agencies to promote EJ and protect people living in communities already overburdened by pollution. The MOU also included a commitment to provide periodic updates to the public (US Environmental Protection Agency 2011).

More recently, the Biden-Harris Administration has elevated the topics of equity at a national level as an immediate priority and called for a whole-of-government approach to address existing and historical harms. In January of 2021, the Administration created the Justice40 initiative, which aims to deliver 40% of the overall benefits of federal investments in

climate and clean energy, including sustainable transportation, to disadvantaged communities.[21]

The Justice40 initiative includes interim guidance for federal agencies involved in programs covered by the initiative. The guidance provides documentation detailing how agencies can identify benefits for included programs, determine the distribution of benefits, and calculate and report on obtaining the 40% goal of Justice40.[22]

Under the Obama-Biden Administration, USDOT provided state departments of transportation (DOTs) and regional planning organizations guidance on complying with EJ requirements, such as the 2015 FHWA Environmental Justice Reference Guide.[23] This precedent has continued during the Biden-Harris Administration, as evidenced by the agency's response to the 2021 Executive Order 13895 (Advancing Racial Equity and support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government)[24]. In May of 2021, USDOT released a 'Request for Information' (RFI) on transportation equity data that could aid the USDOT in evaluating transportation program and policy inequities.[25] The goal of the RFI is for the US DOT to assess to what extent and in what ways its programs and policies have created and maintained systemic barriers to opportunity for disadvantaged populations. The objective of this assessment will be to aid the agency in developing and maintaining programs and policies that distribute resources and benefits more equitably.

The National US DOT Equity Action Plan was released in January 2022.[26] The plan provides an explicit recognition of equity in transportation planning with four equity actions: wealth creation, intervention through direct hands-on technical support, empowering communities in decision making, and expanding access to affordable transportation options to bring economic mobility and transportation benefits. The plan identifies examples of gaps and opportunities within each of these action areas.

On March 28, 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration released the US DOT Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2022 through 2026.[27] The DOT Strategic Plan has centered equity as a department-wide strategic goal. The US Government has taken a critical lead in institutionalizing equity across the DOT's policies and programs, with the aim of reducing inequities across the transportation systems and the communities they affect. The Strategic Plan includes the following objectives:

- Expanding access to transportation jobs and business opportunities by removing barriers for individuals, business, and communities.
- Reduce the effects of structural obstacles to building wealth.
- Empower communities through innovative public engagement with diverse stakeholders and through leaders to foster exchange and ownership.
- Ensure that equity considerations for disadvantaged and underserved communities are integrated into the planning, development, and implementation of all transportation investments.

Critical for this plan and the partners to consider are the performance indicators:

- All State DOTs and the largest 100 MPOs adopt a quantitative Equity Screening component to their STIP/TIP development processes by 2030.
- By 2025, increase by 5% the number of US DOT discretionary grant applicants from disadvantaged communities who have never applied for US DOT funding before.
- Increase US DOT direct contract dollars to small, disadvantaged businesses from 18.2% in FY 2021 to 22% by FY 2026.
- Reduce national transportation cost burden by 5%, including transportation travel cost as a percentage of income by FY 2030.

Federal Laws and Executive Orders

The US Department of Transportation (US DOT)'s Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a state of the practice report in 2019 documenting Environmental Justice (EJ) analysis in transportation planning and programming, providing guidance for state and regional agencies.[28] The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) also released guidance in 2020 for state and regional planning agencies (DOTs, MPOs, and RPCs) on how to integrate equity analysis and address equity in regional transportation planning processes.[29]

Both resources state that all equity analyses should first and foremost abide by the legal requirements of the following three laws and regulations:

1. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.[30]
2. 1994 Executive Order 12898 on Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.[31]
3. 2000 Executive Order 13166 on Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).[32]

State, regional, and local transportation agencies are required to identify populations protected under federal law/order (Title VI; E.O. 12898), determine whether transportation plans or projects have a disproportionate impact on these populations (Title VI), and analyze whether plans or projects have a detrimental impact on protected populations (E.O. 12898). E.O. 13166 requires agencies to provide federally funded, accessible services, programs, and activities for LEP populations, but doesn't require an analysis of disproportionate or detrimental impacts.[29] Similarly, Title VII (Civil Rights Act 1964) prohibits workplace discrimination and harassment based on any of the characteristics protected under the Act, including the 2020 court decision to confirm 'sex' applies to gay and transgender individuals. Subsequent federal legislation has led to further protections under Title VI based upon age, gender, and disability, whether mental or physical.

State and regional planning agencies often conduct equity analyses to address these three laws and regulations. These analyses are intended to result in an equitable allocation of

transportation investment benefits (e.g., through a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), or other regional transportation plans or projects).[33]

Prior to conducting an equity analysis, the FHWA and NASEM reports recommend first laying a foundation for the equity analysis by creating an inclusive public engagement plan that provides meaningful opportunities for community involvement.

Figure 5 highlights several key dates for defining moments in Vermont's history. By no means comprehensive, it includes points whereby a population and community were recognized, or when federal legislation, such as Urban Renewal policies, had outsized impacts affecting the ability to achieve equitable outcomes. Some of these historic policies such as Urban Renewal and the creation of the nation's interstates have complicated stories regarding equity. This graphic provides a visual timeline of these significant actions and policies.

FIGURE 5: KEY DATES CONCERNING EQUITY IN VERMONT

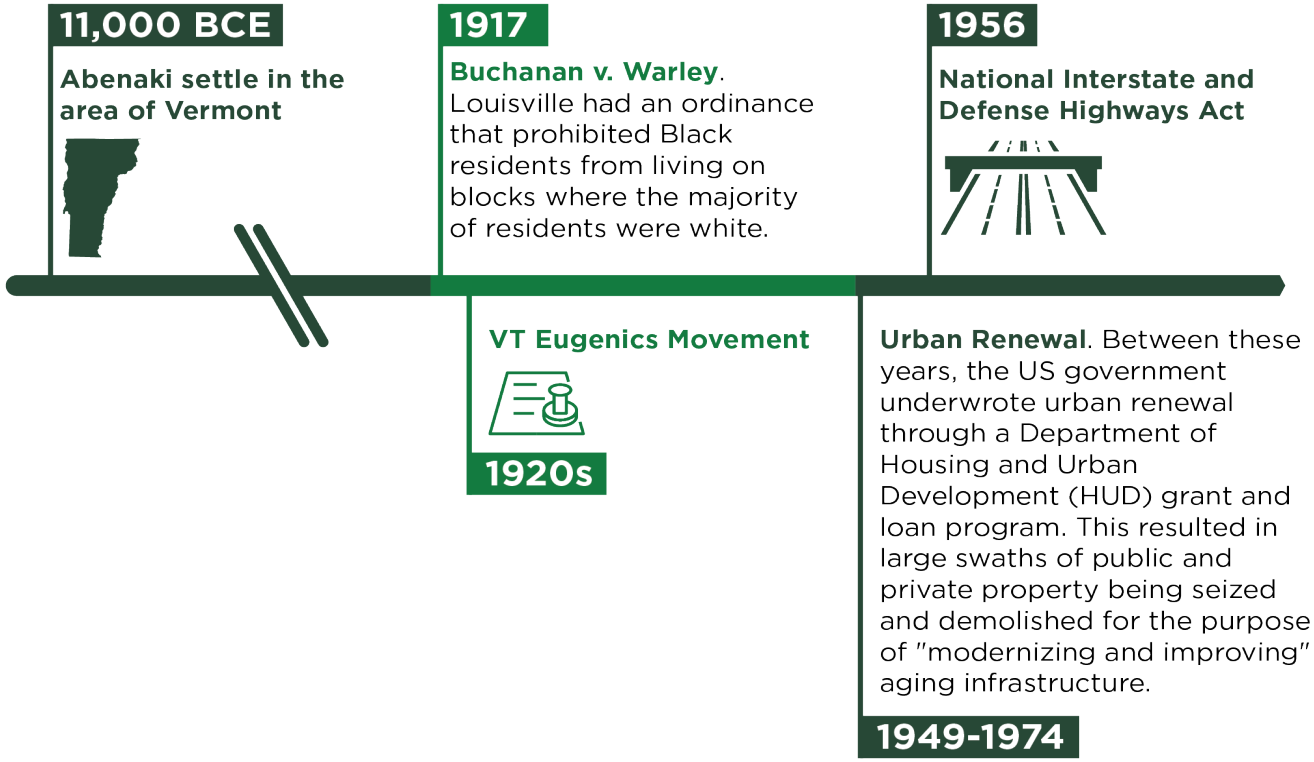
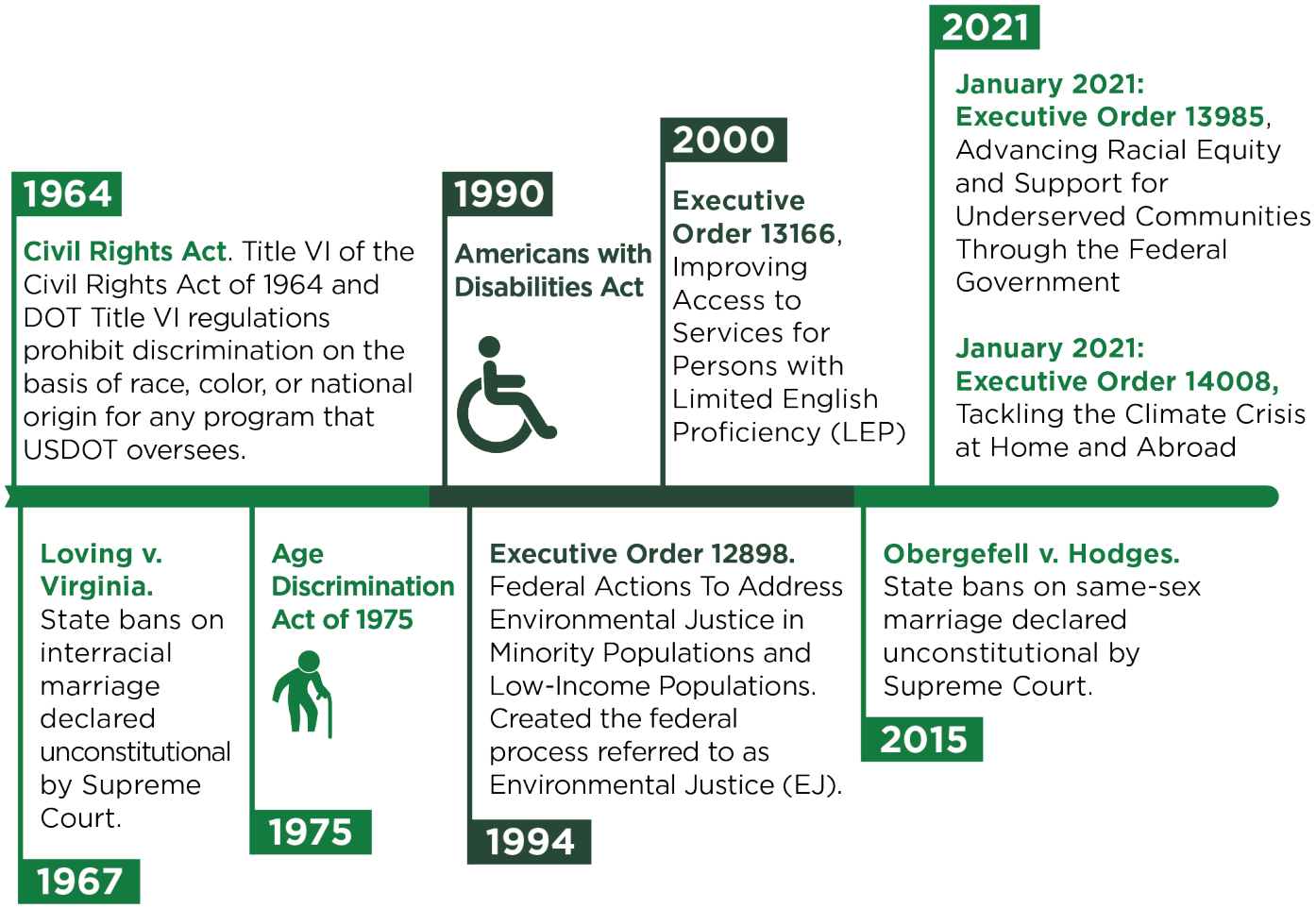


FIGURE 6: KEY DATES CONCERNING EQUITY IN VERMONT (CON'T)



1.8.1 Guidance and Successful Practices

In addition to federal efforts and resources, guidance and methods for addressing equity in transportation have been produced by transportation and equity research groups, as well as individual state, regional, and local transportation agencies. The following sections summarize guidance and successful practices on how agencies at various levels of government can integrate equity measures or requirements into the transportation planning process to improve equity outcomes for disadvantaged communities.

Implications for VT: The AOT works with the 10 non-metropolitan Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) - Vermont's only Metropolitan Planning Organization – to identify needs, develop regional transportation plans and prioritize regional transportation needs.

Formulating a Public Engagement Plan

The essential first step towards embedding and creating an equitable process involves making a comprehensive engagement plan. The engagement plan serves as a continuous, iterative, and agile process that needs to change to meet the needs of the communities involved. Public engagement requires:

- Connection (meeting the communities where they are and in ways that are inclusive, understandable, and respectful).
- Education (reciprocal)
- Sustainability (continual and resilient partnerships)
- Adequately resourced (Adequate time, budget, and flexibility)
- Evaluation and Evolution (measuring and monitoring change)

To create an inclusive public engagement plan, planning agencies should first identify disadvantaged populations that may be impacted by proposed projects or plans and connect with these populations to both encourage participation and better understand potential differential impacts. Tailored engagement strategies should be utilized to communicate with the focus populations meaningfully, respectfully, and to ensure these populations can comfortably and honestly express their needs and desires. Finally, an inclusive and meaningful engagement plan needs to sustain equitable participation through long-lasting relationships and partnerships.[29]

The FHWA includes the following recommendations to achieve successful tailored engagement:

- Ensure focus communities are informed of participation opportunities and consider outreach activities such as surveys and focus groups. Make it easy for disadvantaged community members to participate by selecting a variety of days and times, providing remote participation options, offering incentives, offering accessible accommodations, and ensuring that facilities are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible.
- Make outreach materials and engagement efforts accessible for people of different backgrounds and

abilities. This could include flyers written in multiple languages, including visual and auditory aides at engagement events, or connecting with advocacy organizations and local media outlets to ensure all populations in an area are being reached.[33]

After identifying the focus communities and determining widespread, common needs, AOT staff should provide project or plan-related education in culturally appropriate formats to inform community participants and partner organizations. Community participants and partner organizations can provide local and cultural insight to AOT staff about issues and needs, as well as considerations about and evaluations of the public engagement and equity analysis processes.[29] Participation by community members should be meaningful and worthwhile for the participants, and agencies should document and share with participants how input will be considered and acted upon.[28] The decision making process should be communicated clearly to all stakeholders, to maintain transparency and accountability, and to maintain a sustainable, long-term relationship.[29]

A performance-based approach can be used to establish goals and metrics for the public engagement process, and data from community participants and focus communities can be collected to measure the effectiveness of the engagement processes throughout the project or plan. Specifically, number and diversity of participants (compared to regional characteristics), and participant evaluations of workshops, surveys, or focus groups should be collected.

Federal Funding and the Role of Regional Partners

Prior to discussing national guidance and best practices for integrating equity into transportation planning and delivery, it is important to review how transportation funding is allocated and how project decision making is delegated among federal, state, and regional planning agencies. Funding for transportation projects is derived from a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local governments, public or private tolls, and property and sales taxes. However, federal transportation funding provides capital funding for major project investments through funding mechanisms such as the Federal Highway Trust Fund and the Mass Transit Account of the Trust Fund. Most of the programs funded through these means are run by state DOTs, and the state DOTs then distribute money to regional and local areas based on need and priorities.[34] Three entities in Vermont receive funds in this way as a "direct recipient." These entities include the AOT (as a state DOT), Green Mountain Transit (as an urban transit provider), and CCRPC (as an MPO). These two entities will need to have a similar equity framework and performance measurement system as the AOT to measure progress. As such, regional planning agencies are often delegated significant planning responsibilities, including funding and

> Direct financial incentives are recognized as a powerful tool to compensate individuals for their expertise and information as well as cover costs associated with an individual's participation. However, direct incentives are limited in their flexibility given current federal and state regulations.

decision making abilities. Because of this, the following sections share insights from guidance directed at both state and regional planning agencies and examples from varying levels of government.

Spotlight: Integrating Equity into Prioritization

In a study by Krapp, Barajas, and Wennick (2021), the authors reviewed documentation from MPOs serving the 40 largest urban areas in the US to determine how MPOs consider transportation equity during the project prioritization process when developing the TIP. The authors determined that just over half of MPOs used equity as a prioritization criterion, and most only evaluated equity by proximity to communities of concern (location burdens- and benefits-based).[35] Krapp, Barajas, and Wennick categorized equity criteria presented by the MPOs into the following six categories:

- **Location burdens-based** – Project is awarded points if located outside of communities of concern (project presence seen as burdensome to communities).
- **Location benefits-based** – Project is awarded points if located within or adjacent to communities of concern (project presence seen as beneficial to communities).
- **Impacts-based** – Project is awarded points or points are subtracted based on evaluation of potential benefits and burdens of communities of concern.
- **Access to destinations-based** – Project is awarded points if it provides previously non-existing access to key destinations, more points for greater access.
- **User-based** – Project is awarded points if the new project will be used by communities of concern.
- **Community-engagement-based** – Project is awarded points based on community participation effort, taking into account project sponsor's evaluation of project impact in community.[35]

After synthesizing and evaluating the equity criteria used by MPOs, the authors proposed the following recommendations for MPOs looking to better integrate and evaluate equity during the prioritization process:

- Agencies should utilize multiple equity-based prioritization criteria (listed above) that focus on mitigating inequity, improving existing conditions, and incorporating disadvantaged communities into the planning process.
- Agencies should assess the benefits (added points) and detriments (subtracted points) of potential projects with respect to a variety of equity-focused demographic groups (e.g., race, income, location, ability/disability, LEP).
- All projects should require a community-based criterion to gauge the community's support (or awareness) of the project. Agencies could also consider requiring project sponsors or community group leaders to submit project assessments with an evaluation of how the project will impact their community.
- Agencies should adjust project weighting to prioritize investments to communities with greater needs.
- Agencies should conduct regional analyses to monitor and evaluate equity outcomes for disadvantaged populations to

see if inequality is decreasing and to see if equity prioritization measures are effective.[35]

An additional report released by the Center for Transportation, Equity, Decisions, and Dollars (CTEDD) in 2019 reviewed national MPO equity practices, and came to similar conclusions as Krapp, Barajas, and Wennik (2021) regarding the importance of evaluating user benefits for disadvantaged populations, the necessity of community-based criteria to gauge a community's support, and the recommendation of weighting equity-based criteria more heavily during the prioritization process. CTEDD provided the following additional recommendations for integrating equity into MPO project prioritization:

- Larger regional planning agencies with greater resources could consider allocating a certain percentage of funding to increase equity in the project prioritization process.
- Project outcomes and return on investment should be evaluated using an equity lens to assess the potential benefits and detriments to affected disadvantaged communities.[36]

Although prioritization processes differ across state and regional planning agencies, the recommendations by Krapp, Barajas, and Wennick (2021) and CTEDD (2019) can be used as overall guidance for agencies looking to better integrate equity into the transportation planning process.

The next section illustrates the concepts presented in previous sections by providing specific examples of state planning agencies that have integrated equity into project evaluation and planning efforts.

Implications for VT: Vermont planning agencies should strive to include multiple equity-based prioritization criteria (not just proximity-based) that work towards mitigating inequity in the transportation system as well as involve key communities into the planning process.

Corrective Equity: Measuring & Evaluating Impacts

The NASEM and FHWA reports list the following as essential tasks to measure and evaluate future project or plan impacts:

- Select indicators that will measure the impact of future projects/plans on key populations (e.g., travel time reductions, safety improvements, air pollution, displacement), and document the rationale for each indicator.

  Implications for VT: Vermont planning agencies should develop and implement criteria to help prioritize funding to transportation projects that include solutions to address historical or current inequities.

- Segment projects by type for separate analysis (e.g., transit analysis, bike/ped analysis, highway expansion; preservation, modernization, expansion), and allocate investments based on geographic distribution of key populations and/or usage by key populations. This aims to ensure an equitable distribution of resources.[33]
- Measure outputs and outcomes of select indicators and document results. Compare outcomes at the state or regional level. Potential resources and tools include

stakeholder input, GIS mapping, travel demand model analyses, or air quality or noise exposure analyses. [33]

- Quantitatively evaluate differences between population groups using statistical analysis, benchmarks, or location quotients. Qualitatively validate assessments using previous studies, surveys, and stakeholder input.
- Determine and record evidence of disproportionate and/or detrimental impacts resulting from proposed project or plan. [29]

Implications for VT: Vermont planning agencies should seek to identify indicators which capture impacts to key community members and areas, and which can be quantifiably measured and tracked over time. Indicator results should be compared among population groups to determine disparate impacts to key communities.

After measuring and evaluating future project or plan impacts on key populations, state and regional transportation agencies can use these results to derive solutions on how future projects or plans, as well as the agency, can mitigate inequity for disadvantaged populations.

APPENDIX C. TASK 4: GAP AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

This chapter synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters to identify key needs and gaps in how equity is applied in the activities of the AOT and its RPC partners. Specifically, this chapter accounts for the following:

- National Best Practices
- Federal and State Regulations/Policies
- Federal, State, and Regional Processes/Data/Tools
- Direct Engagement
- Stakeholder Engagement
- RPC Engagement

The synthesis accounts for local, state, and national practices and compares that with the insights obtained from the Task 3 engagement activities (chapter 3). In some instances, there are gaps between the stated practice and the actual activities and actions. In other cases, there are ways to consider new input or consider emerging methods and approaches. These all lead to opportunities which will inform the recommendations.

1.9 TASK 4 FRAMEWORK

The following framework was used to review and organize the Task 2 and 3 materials in Task 4 to identify gaps and opportunities.

Pillars of Process Equity:

- Distributive: Accurate Population Representation
- Procedural: Equitable Access to Decision Making
- Contextual: Needs Analysis; Service Provision
- Corrective: Prioritization and Selection Process; Ongoing Performance Management

Task 4 Framework:

- Needs: What should happen, based on national best practice or requirements and values expressed in engagement
- Existing Offerings: What is happening in the operations of the AOT and its RPC partners

- Gaps: Where are there disconnects between needs and existing offerings, and where there are potential opportunities for growth

Framework Key:

- **Bold Text** = suggestions and opportunities
- *Italicized Text* = resources identified (e.g., documents, tools, data)

1.10 PILLAR 1 DISTRIBUTIVE EQUITY: ACCURATE POPULATION REPRESENTATION

Framing questions:

- How can we obtain an accurate representation of the population and identify communities of concern?
- How have the partners and local jurisdictions described or understood who lives in the state/region? How do we recognize, communicate, and engage with individuals and communities?

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
Needs: What Should Happen	• National Best Practices/Guidance: ○ **To determine key populations, data from the following sources could be considered**: *American Community Survey* or *Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the US Census Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, local adult literacy or ESL programs*, or stakeholder input (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices). ○ **To determine the regional distribution and concentration of key populations and the transportation performance they experience, the following mapping/screening/modeling tools could be considered:** *GIS mapping, EPA's EJSCREEN, Vermont Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, travel surveys, regional travel demand modeling, or mapping,* and use of *General Transit Feed Specifications* to capture transit stops, routes, and fixed-route transit access (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices and Task 5 Data and Tools). • Engagement Best Practices/Guidance:

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	○ **AOT and RPC staff should attend community events and work on relationship building with key communities before seeking input**. Staff should have conversations with community members and leaders to learn which issues are most pertinent to a given community and learn which community members are most affected. More connection of staff to community and understanding of lived experiences is key. Staff should engage in dialogue explaining what AOT goals are and see if there are opportunities to align agency goals with community goals. Agencies should connect with community organizations that have connections with and commitments to communities that are under resourced (Task 3, Direct). ○ Groups identified by stakeholders as equity focus groups include the following: Low-income communities, people with substance abuse issues, older adults, people with disabilities, rural residents, limited English speakers, people who identify as LGBTQ+, people who lack resources, people of color, people experiencing homelessness, people who were previously incarcerated, people without vehicles, people under federal protections (e.g., EJ communities), migrant and immigrant farmworkers, refugees or asylum seekers, and Abenaki Indigenous populations (Task 3, Stakeholder). ○ Improve guidance for using *Equity Impact Worksheets* for internal AOT managers to utilize (Task 3, Stakeholder).
Existing Offerings: What is Happening	• AOT Current Practices: ○ Currently use American Community Survey data. Resources that could be used include: *FHWA Title VI Program Implementation Plan* (Nov 2021), which provides resources and tools to identify protected populations and LEP populations, and *VTrans Public Involvement Guide*, which provides information about how and where to access population data (e.g., *American Community Survey, Community Action Agencies, ECOS Map Viewer*) (Task 2, AOT). • RPC Current Practices: ○ Rely on the same materials as the AOT, including census data. CCRPC developed '*Equity Impact Worksheet*' as a supplement to their '*Public Participation Plan'* guidance. *CCRPC ECOS Map Viewer* and public website *Community Commons* help identify target populations. RPCs can also leverage proximity to and experience with regional community

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	groups to gain a sense of understanding which populations may be disadvantaged (Task 2, RPCs). ○ NRPC has begun involving the state recognized Abenaki of the Missisquoi in planning efforts, a local community that has minimal recognition in national publicly available data sources. WRPC recently has involved local indigenous communities around Brattleboro to inform community priorities (Task 2, RPCs). • Current Engagement Practices: ○ For the direct engagement efforts, four marginalized community groups in VT were selected using government databases, *VT Environmental Disparity Index*, and qualitative research by RDI & REJOICE (Task 3, Direct). ○ Resources used to identify groups facing inequity include the following: ▪ Tools: *EJ Screen, Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, FHWA HEP, VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization Process (VPSP2) program. Additional tools could include those being developed by ANR as part of Act 154.* ▪ Agencies/Organizations: VT Civil Rights Office, Agency of Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Health. ▪ Community Outreach: Collecting qualitative data by meeting with community members/leaders and advocacy groups to better understand challenges for distinct population groups (e.g., past work conducted by REJOICE). ▪ Policies/Plans: *Transit State Management Plan, Vermont Climate Action Plan, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program* ▪ Services: Demand response/Dial-a-Ride services such as those supported by the Elders & Persons with Disabilities Committees (Other/External Organizations) (Task 3, Stakeholder).
Gaps/Opportunities: Difference Between Needs and Existing Offerings; Potential Growth Opportunities	• Stakeholders reported a 'lack of data' and information on populations facing inequities that might enable AOT staff to raise awareness about these populations. The 'lack of data' in this case could refer to data inaccessibility or lack of data granularity but is also likely a response to stakeholders feeling unable to find answers to questions being asked, stakeholders expressing a desire for resource provision (e.g., providing fact sheets, postprocessed data, guidance) to make decisions, or an inability for stakeholders to answer key questions using available data. (Task 3, Stakeholder). **The AOT and RPCs should continue to develop and share information and documentation**

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	with each other about how to access and utilize publicly available datasets to answer questions about key population identification and population representation. Secondary, local datasets and qualitative resources should be used to supplement national or state-level data wherever possible and applicable, and shared between the agencies, as well. • Although both the AOT and RPCs rely on similar resources and materials to identify populations and determine accurate population representation, **a more standardized process and related training materials or resources could be developed that provides consistency in population identification and ensures up-to-date, reliable quantitative and qualitative information is used.** A key starting point for this would be the *FHWA Title VI Program Implementation Plan* (Nov 2021) and the *VTrans Public Involvement Guide* (2017). • While tools and resources exist on how to identify key population groups, ongoing relationship building is equally important to ensuring accurate population representation. **The AOT and RPCs should identify opportunities and responsibilities for ongoing engagement such as attending community events to learn more about key issues for community groups and to foster trust by building relationships with community members.** These activities should not only be part of a specific plan or project but be considered part of the essential infrastructure of AOT activities to build more sufficient community trust and involvement (Task 2, AOT, Task 3, Direct). • To increase involvement of equity focus populations, improve access to community engagement events, enhance meeting accessibility, and improve accuracy of population representation, the AOT and RPCs could consider **implementing participant compensation** for meeting attendance. • **There is an opportunity for the AOT and the RPCs to work towards increasing involvement of local Indigenous Population groups in planning efforts due to the limited representation of Indigenous People in publicly available datasets**. Greater involvement with other identified equity focus groups that have limited representation in national datasets should be encouraged, as well. Research and communications held as part of the TEF work indicate a slow, steady relationship building process will result in the best outcome. The implementation of Act 154, Vermont's Environmental Justice law may present the platform for building a durable relationship between Indigenous populations of Vermont and state agencies.

1.11 PILLAR 2 PROCEDURAL EQUITY: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING

Framing questions:

- How can all voices be heard, participate, and engage in the planning process and create space for their involvement? Are those most burdened or affected by the plan part of the dialogue?
- How have the AOT and its partners incorporated diverse, traditionally marginalized or underrepresented members of the public into the planning process?

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings

Needs: What Should Happen	• National Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ **Formulate a public engagement plan by identifying disadvantaged populations that may be affected by future projects and connect with these populations to encourage participation and better understand potential differential impacts.** Utilize tailored engagement strategies to communicate meaningfully, respectfully, and ensure community members can honestly express their needs and desires. Data from community participants should be collected to measure engagement plan efficacy throughout the project lifecycle. **Communicate decision making process clearly to all stakeholders to maintain transparency and accountability.** Sustain equitable participation through long-lasting relationships and partnerships (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices).
	
	• Engagement Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ **Multichannel engagement:** Provision of in-person and virtual community engagement events, small and large meeting size opportunities, multiple dates and varied times for events, targeted engagement to specific groups, and the provision of interpreters, translators, and childcare to provide ample opportunity for attendance and engagement (Task 3, Direct, Stakeholder).
	  ○ **Consider distributing outreach information through a variety of mediums** (e.g., flyers, emails, phone calls, door-knocking, text messages, phone alerts, local news outlets, various forms of social media, and direct mail); communicate in an accessible manner using community-appropriate language(s) (Task 3, Direct).

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	○ **Consider having meetings hosted by a community member representative** to encourage honest and comfortable participation, especially in BIPOC communities and communities with limited English-speaking populations (Task 3, Direct). ○ Transportation agencies should **illustrate to communities how their input will meaningfully impact decisions**. This requires transparent and accessible public participation processes that allow for multiple opportunities for participation and for providing feedback throughout the project lifecycle. It also requires that the agencies take seriously the requirement for community input to impact decisions (Task 3, Direct). ○ **AOT and RPC staff should connect with local, community-based organizations, community leaders/liaisons, or housing managers/providers to tap into networks, gain local perspectives, and build trust in a community.** Staff could request guidance and suggestions for engagement/outreach efforts that are particularly effective for a given community. It is important for staff to compensate community organizations for their time and effort (Task 3, Direct). These efforts require designated responsibility and ongoing commitment of resources. ○ **Staff should take note of immediate issues present in a community that limit participation ability and facilitate connections to relevant agencies who can address these issues**. Connecting residents to direct service providers can foster trust and improve community engagement (Task 3, Direct). ○ Agencies should listen to and value feedback from community members that isn't delivered in a traditional or professional manner (whether that be because of the content, tone, or delivery), and should consider pointed input that may make agency staff uncomfortable. These types of input are valuable and should be recorded and tracked similar to other types of feedback (Task 3, Direct). ○ It is important for agency staff to provide educational/context materials to community members who are interested in learning more/having greater context on a given issue (Task 3, Direct). ○ Migrant workers should be made aware of available services. Outreach and listening to these populations would help gain input and valuable perspective (Task 3, RPCs).

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings

Existing Offerings: What is Happening	• AOT Current Practices:
	  ○ No definitive resource used, and no standardized methodology or process established. Resources available include: *VTrans Public Involvement Guide and VTrans Project Definition Process Guidebook* (2017), which encourages early stakeholder participation in project planning and provides resources for methods of outreach to encourage participation by disadvantaged population; the AOT *VTransparency* website where current and future construction projects are listed along with contact information; and the *Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)* which standardized the mechanism by which the AOT coordinates policy development and planning through the RPCs to make sure VT citizens and rural local officials are involved in the planning process (Task 2, AOT).
	• RPC Current Practices:
	  ○ RPCs often have several boards and commissions appointed by member towns which offers the general public a greater degree of access to decision making compared to the AOT. All meetings are open to the public, but RPC boards have the final vote for policies and investment decisions. The effort put forth by RPC representatives to select accessible meeting times and locations varies. Some RPCs provide stipends for members of the public who participate in public engagement events, but as these stipends count as income, this can complicate participation due to income criteria required by certain assistance programs (Task 2, RPCs, Task 3, RPCs).
	  ○ Internet and remote access have enhanced public participation significantly and aided in making town meetings more accessible (e.g., amplified audio, visual, and translation capabilities) (Task 3, RPCs).
	  ○ Certain populations and community groups wish *not* to be engaged (e.g., the Mennonite community in Lamoille). RPCs must be respectful of this, and be thoughtful in communication efforts (e.g., sending letters vs. engagement in other forms), and considerate when reaching out to community leaders (Task 3, RPCs).
	• Current Engagement Successes:
	  ○ For the direct engagement efforts, community-specific engagement plans were developed for each community group via consultation with community leaders and liaisons. This included 1) participatory mapping, 2) community meetings, focus groups, and forums, 3) photovoice challenge and ceremony, 4) neighborhood walks, 5) one-on-ones w/

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	community leaders, 6) facilitated dialogue, and 7) assisted public participation (Task 3, Direct). o 'Project Vision' takes place in City of Rutland. It involves staff from the police department doing neighborhood walks to gain feedback and input from community members. Invites are sent out to residents through the mail twice a month. Residents are receptive to the less-formal nature of this engagement (Task 3, RPCs). o In the Bennington neighborhoods of Willowbrook and Orchard Village, community meetings were held to address bus schedule issues; residents and school officials advocated for better schedules and changes were made to the schedule as a result (Task 3, Direct). o Communities with strong networks of service organizations and community groups were able to spread the word about community meetings more easily (Task 3, Direct). • Current Engagement Challenges: o RPCs are relied on heavily for local engagement, but some RPCs don't feel supported by AOT with local engagement and feel that AOT will make design changes without considering community input or considering the methodology used to arrive at the proposed design. o RPCs have their own public participation plans but weren't sure who to turn to and who may be the most appropriate information contacts were at the AOT. *VTrans Public Involvement Guide* is provided to public transit providers, but Highway Division staff aren't familiar with it or don't use it (Task 3, Stakeholder). o Most community organizations were not familiar with proactive strategies that the AOT adopts for equitable engagement (Task 3, Stakeholder). o In working with community organizations to expand involvement in the decision making process, RPCs and municipalities have struggled recruiting new community members from disadvantaged population groups to participate in conversations and dialogue about decision making. This is particularly challenging in rural areas with smaller populations, fewer stakeholders, less access to programs and communication, and no obvious community 'champions' (Task 3, RPCs, Stakeholder). o When advocating for the equitable provision of transportation via the Task 3 engagement opportunities, many community members experienced hesitation and self-doubt that they

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	could meaningfully influence outcomes. Some community members were wary of community engagement efforts and cited distrust in the government or of the impact of their involvement. It was also unclear to some community members how to give input, provide comments, or submit complaints about transportation challenges. This discouraged participation (Task 3, Direct). ○ RPC staff and community members identified a perceived lack of voice/standing from community members and questioned where the local voice mattered. Equity-focused work is often driven by people vocal about issues but may not include disadvantaged groups. In rural areas, this gap is exacerbated by a lack of internet access, lack of access to transportation information, and lack of access to public transit (Task 3, Stakeholder, RPCs).
Gaps/Opportunities: Difference Between Needs and Existing Offerings; Potential Growth Opportunities	• The AOT lacks a standardized methodology for ensuring equitable access to decision making, and RPCs and community members have voiced concerns that the AOT may make decisions without considering community input. To ameliorate this**, the AOT should utilize a variety of resources such as *VTrans' Public Involvement Guide, VTrans' Project Definition Process Guidebook, Migrant Justice's constituent database*, and meetings with community groups and community organizations to better understand how projects will impact certain population groups, and to ensure all communities of concern are considered in the decision making process.** The following tactics should be considered for implementation: ○ **Work with community organizations and liaisons to help facilitate discussions with specific communities of concern:** This can help bridge cultural and language gaps to ensure that communication is clear and effective. Community liaisons or champions can also help encourage participation from hesitant participants. ○ **Provide opportunities for community discussions** about how community input is integrated, how project decisions are made, and why certain input or feedback was/wasn't incorporated into decisions. ○ **Develop tailored engagement strategies** for specific communities of concern. This requires preplanning and resources. ○ **Provide communications materials and in multiple languages and formats** (e.g., letters sent to homes, flyers posted at frequented community locations, posted on community websites)

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	○ **Demonstrate the connection between engagement and decisions:** Providing opportunities for community discussions about how community input is integrated, how project decisions are made, and why certain input or feedback was/wasn't incorporated into decisions. ○ **Leverage every point of engagement by connecting people to resources as needed:** Address immediate needs brought up by people in meetings even if they are not immediately connected to the project or plan being presented. Connect community members with relevant agencies who can address their issues. Consider bringing representatives of key service providers to public meetings. ○ **Provide engagement in multiple formats to reach more people:** The AOT and RPCs should provide ample opportunity for community engagement events in-person and virtual, at different dates and times, and provide interpreters and translators to ensure all members of the audience can easily participate. ○ **Look beyond the public meeting:** to improve community participation and to foster stronger community relationships, community engagement and discussion opportunities can be conducted outside of large, in-person meeting or "Zoom" (online breakout) rooms, and can take the form of neighborhood walks, participatory mapping, or on-one-on discussions with community leaders. ○ **Formally incorporate community members into the decision making process through methods such as board or committee appointments:** Community members interested in contributing further to the decision making process can be included on AOT or RPC committees with decision making abilities that affect local transportation (e.g., advisory or executive boards), or hired into positions at transportation agencies or community organizations with decision making roles. Agencies could consider using participatory budgeting to incorporate transparent community feedback opportunities with distinct outcomes, utilize regular community meeting events (e.g., town meetings) to vote on initiatives, or nontraditional methods such as digital or online voting to improve the feasibility and accessibility of voting. For community groups and organizations already engaged in the decision making process, (e.g., such as members of the Rutland organization, Disabled Access and Advocacy of the Rutland Area (DAARA)), agencies

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	could consider the provision of technical support, funding, and compensation to support and encourage these efforts to improve local transportation (Task 3, Direct).

1.12 PILLAR 3 CONTEXTUAL EQUITY: NEEDS ANALYSIS

Framing questions:

- Are there inequities in the outcomes experienced by members of our society?
- Are projects being identified to address current inequities? What methods are used to identify these needs?

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings

Needs: What Should Happen	• National Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ **Needs assessment recommended at the state or regional level, with the goal for state/regional planning agencies to understand and prioritize most important concerns and identify high priority areas.** Needs assessment includes the following:
	  ▪ Collecting input from community members from disadvantaged groups about major issues and needs using surveys with demographic questions.
	  ▪ Evaluate environmental health and safety conditions for disadvantaged populations resulting from existing transportation system using the *EJSCREEN tool, walk/bike audits, regional emissions models, or crash data*. Future tools from Vermont's implementation of Act 154 may provide additional local Vermont context.
	  ▪ Determine access to essential services using *GIS mapping, GTFS feeds, travel demand modeling, census data, travel surveys, and transit rider surveys* to evaluate access. *US Census data* including *Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) and Local Area Transportation Characteristics for Households*

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	(LATCH) data can be used to determine key population travel characteristics and patterns to additionally determine access.[33] ▪ Report back and validate findings with community members and other stakeholders (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices). • Current transportation needs for underserved populations: o Well-lit and weather-resistant bus shelters are an existing and highly desired need for community members (Task 3, Direct). o Contiguous, lit (related to comfort and safety), well-marked, and well-maintained sidewalks and bike lanes to provide safe and reliable accessibility for all residents, but especially for residents with disabilities (Direct, Stakeholder). o Transportation to meet daily needs. **Transportation connections to major cities/towns or greater remote job availability would enable access to larger job markets.** Broadband is becoming an essential mode to provide access to jobs and services. (Direct, Stakeholder, Task 3, RPCs). o **Active modal (e.g., bicycle/pedestrian) infrastructure in and around vulnerable communities can provide safe and efficient means of travel besides cars, which is particularly important for residents without cars**, and should be valued and emphasized more heavily throughout the state (Task 3, RPCs). o The provision and maintenance of pedestrian infrastructure and affordable housing near essential services (Direct, Stakeholder). o The creation of bike lanes on high-volume roads, or the extension and maintenance of high-volume road shoulders (Task 3, Direct). o Community members who lived near essential services saw walking as an easy and healthy transportation option (Task 3, Direct). • Additional guidance identified from Task 3 engagement: o Prioritization of the emotional health, satisfaction, and skills of bus drivers as critical components of promoting safe and reliable public transportation (Task 3, Direct). o Trailer Park management (or other relevant community management organizations) should work closely with state agencies and local jurisdictions to ensure roads are built

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	responsibly (to deter flooding) and maintained (de-iced during the winter, re-paved when necessary) to improve road accessibility and reliability (Task 3, Direct). ○ Not a one-size fits all approach, but tailored solutions to each area for the populations that live in that area (Task 3, Stakeholder). ○ **Additional support for smaller, rural communities or municipalities with direct assistance, capacity building, technical assistance, and funding** (Task 3, RPCs). ○ Request consideration for more holistic thinking – considering safety, accessibility, mobility, equity, and affordability together (Task 3, Stakeholder).
Existing Offerings: What is Happening	• AOT Current Practices: ○ Current consideration of equity in identification of investment needs is limited. Needs assessments can occur through proactive planning efforts (informed by federal guidance) or from changes in the environment, safety, or community support (informed by community meetings, public input, or performance metrics). • RPC Current Practices: ○ RPCs identify and prioritize the majority of AOT investment needs which the AOT agrees with or vetoes. Needs typically result from day-to-day RPC activities as well as long term planning activities. Similar to the AOT, equity is not and has not been a driving force in the identification of needs, but some regional projects have goals that align with positive equity outcomes. • Current transportation challenges for underserved populations: ○ Challenges transporting middle and high school students due to lack of transportation opportunities. Children experience unsafe walking conditions to school (e.g., walking along highways, crossing non-signalized roads, walking in dark and inclement weather), experience stress, anxiety, and absenteeism from school as a result (Task 3, Direct). ○ Difficulties accessing physical and mental health care appointments quickly and reliably (Task 3, Direct). ○ Barriers in access to better job opportunities due to bus schedule limitations (Task 3, Direct).

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	○ Older residents often rely on a personal vehicle to access essential services, especially during inclement weather. Flooding, ice, and snow make access to vehicles, driving, or walking difficult, particularly on poorly maintained roads in rural areas (Task 3, Direct). ○ Multiuse bike/ped paths could be used to connect residential areas with employment centers but often don't have financial backing (Task 3, RPCs). ○ Personal vehicles can be inaccessible due to the cost of owning and maintaining car, and older adults or adults with disabilities face additional accessibility challenges with personal cars (Task 3, Direct). ○ Safety issues on the bus arise for riders with disabilities, who, if not properly situated, could be injured if drivers begin driving or stops suddenly (Task 3, Direct). ○ Undocumented residents living by the border reported feeling trapped due to a lack of access to transportation options and a lack of access to amenities (Task 3, Stakeholder). ○ Employment equity challenges are worsened by the shifting nature of the rural economy (e.g., a 12th generation farmer having to find work could be more difficult than an office worker in an urban area) (Task 3, RPCs). ○ Community members largely felt that personal electric vehicles were unaffordable even with subsidies and felt that personal EVs were unreasonable and inequitable (Task 3, Direct). ○ Trails through wooded areas and railroad tracks used to transport groceries on foot due to lack of pedestrian infrastructure (Task 3, Direct).
Gaps/Opportunities: Difference Between Needs and Existing Offerings; Potential Growth Opportunities	• **The AOT and RPCs should evaluate the inequities of current transportation system outcomes and highlight improvements that would improve outcomes for underserved populations.** For example, underserved populations have expressed needs for the expansion of existing bike, ped, and transit infrastructure to provide safe and reliable transportation to work, school, medical appointments, and the grocery store. These needs are greater for older adults and residents with disabilities, and are exacerbated by inclement weather, and poorly maintained and serviced roads. Owning a personal vehicle is inaccessible to many due to the cost, which puts added pressure and reliance onto transit and active transportation modes. As such, **the AOT and RPCs should prioritize the investment in transit and active transportation modes to provide solutions to these high priority needs, improve connections to major cities and**

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	towns, and work towards more equitable transportation outcomes for underserved populations. • The AOT and RPCs currently do not foreground equity as a consideration in the identification of investment needs. **An opportunity exists for the AOT and RPCs to incorporate equity into the need identification process to ensure the results of the needs analysis better reflect the needs of all community groups. The AOT and RPCs should collect input from community members from disadvantaged groups to better understand high priority needs and areas.** Stakeholders can additionally utilize tools such as the *EJSCREEN tool* to evaluate health and safety conditions from existing transportation systems, determine access to essential services using *GIS mapping*, and use *US census data* to determine key population travel characteristics. **Stakeholders should approach each community as a distinct entity, and not use a 'one size fits all' approach for determining needs. Lastly, stakeholders should report back the findings of the needs assessment to community members for validation and transparency.** • In rural areas, it can be difficult to identify needs for smaller, under resourced communities. **This presents an opportunity for RPCs to share with one another about best practices in identifying needs in rural areas, including using case studies and success stories, sharing information, and better visualizing equity in rural areas across the state** (Task 3, RPCs). • Community members with vehicles in some communities have volunteered to help other community members access essential services and transport kids to school. In addition, there is existing access to state-funded rides to medical appointments, although the rides can be unpredictable. **Agencies could consider helping to facilitate, organize, or coordinate these efforts, and potentially provide resources to aid in transportation efforts, if appropriate and if capacity allows** (Task 3, Direct).

1.13 PILLAR 3 CONTEXTUAL EQUITY: SERVICE PROVISION

Framing questions:

- Are the services of the AOT and RPCs provided in an equitable manner?
- Are the services available to all members of the population – regardless of ability, income, language, etc.?

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings

Needs: What Should Happen	• National Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ As a recipient of federal funds, the AOT and RPC services must comply with the mandates and regulations set out by *Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address EJ in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, and Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency* regulations. For Title VI and E.O. 12898, agencies are required to identify disadvantaged population groups protected under the mandates/regulations and determine whether or not the transportation project or policy have a disproportionate impact on these populations.[30, 31] For E.O. 12898, agencies are required to provide federally funded, accessible services, programs, and activities for LEP populations[32] (Task 2, AOT).
	  ○ **Ensure that communications materials about AOT services are accessible for people of different backgrounds and abilities.** This could include the provision of materials in multiple languages, the inclusion of visual and auditory aides at events, or the facilitation of community connections with advocacy organizations and local media outlets to ensure all populations in an area are being reached.[33]
	
	• RPC Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ RPCs can provide resources and guidance to communities who have insufficient resources compared to other communities, such as aiding with grant applications or municipal projects (Task 2, RPCs).
	
	• Service provision needs for underserved populations:
	  ○ School bus service or expanded public bus service that aligns with school times, and the provision of stop lights, pedestrian signals, pedestrian paths, and bridges that enable safe

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	access for kids to get to school and transit-reliant families to get to work and the grocery store (Task 3, Direct). ○ **More direct communication and provision of information with public transit providers, such as sharing best communication strategies with transit providers (Task 3, Direct).** ○ **Greater interconnectivity between small towns and urban areas for shuttle and bus services (Task 3, Direct).** ○ Organizing and providing accessible information and greater communication opportunities for the public (Task 3, Direct). ○ **Increase access to programs and services for limited English-speaking populations (Task 3, Direct)**
Existing Offerings: What is Happening	• AOT Current Practices: ○ As a recipient of federal funds, AOT services must comply with *Title VI*, and the AOT uses *Federal Highway Administration Title VI Program guidance* to ensure the AOT is compliant with Title VI. Compliance at the AOT division level is dictated by the guidance. Additional tools and strategies for compliance can be found in the *VTrans Public Involvement Guide*. The AOT measures and reports the level of equitability of service provision to the rest of the AOT using FTA Title VI reports (Task 2, AOT). ○ Currently, community organizations may focus more on procedural equity while the AOT might focus more on service delivery (Task 3, Stakeholder). There may be opportunities for overlap or better integration between these two approaches to improve ultimate equity outcomes. • RPC Current Practices: ○ Each RPC has a Title VI plan with the AOT which defines the minimum expectations for how equity should be considered (Task 2, RPCs). ○ Some RPCs report a lack of resources in being able to educate community members on the process of project planning and development. Mechanisms are required to connect community members to relevant resources (Task 3, RPCs).

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings

	• Service provision challenges experienced by underserved populations or community organizations:
	  ○ Online information about public transit and other transportation services is not accessible to community members with limited English proficiency, or those without access to internet (Task 3, Direct).
	  ○ Route closures and changes not communicated clearly or effectively (Task 3, Direct).
	  ○ Taxis and TNCs are desired, especially for medical appointments, but are often inaccessible due to cost or scarcity (Task 3, Direct).
	  ○ Cultural/language facilitators from the community have tried to create greater access to opportunity and resources but face structural racism and limitations to language access in government systems (Task 3, Direct).
	  ○ Community organizations were not aware of any known equity-improvement policies or programs already in place, pace for equitable change is very slow, gap in relationships with statewide groups, lack of engagement re: policy, program, and project design (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	
	• Service provision successes experienced by underserved populations or community organizations:
	  ○ Free use of public transportation for communities that recently went 'fare-free' (Task 3, Direct).
	  ○ Public Transit work with Old Spokes organization to provide bikes as first/last mile option for people within 5 miles of transit stop; Old Spokes is also considering an e-bike program (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ Notch Healthcare (federal healthcare center) offers free bikes and free kayaks, and transports people to appointments using vans (Task 3, RPCs).
	
	• Policies/programs in place to prioritize equity:
	  ○ DMV programs include interpretation services and not requiring documentation of immigration/resident status (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ Public Transit services focus on increasing access to public transit and job centers in rural areas through targeted services such as providing Dial-a-Ride services, Elders and

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	Persons with Disabilities transportation services, and a Mobility for All Program. The AOT Public Transit division additionally institutes a fixed price range for demand response services (Task 3, Stakeholder). ○ No specific programs for RPCs but some have equity committees or hired consultants to improve equity outcomes (Task 3, Stakeholder). • Road maintenance primarily affects community members with personal vehicles, who tend to be wealthier (Task 3, Direct).
Gaps/Opportunities: Difference Between Needs and Existing Offerings; Potential Growth Opportunities	• Community members voiced the need for more reliable, accessible, and effective communication from AOT service providers. Residents discussed reliability challenges resulting from poorly communicated public transit service updates and road closures, and information accessibility challenges for community members who are limited English speakers. **There is an opportunity to better organize and communicate transportation information and updates for residents, and to increase accessibility of this information for limited English-speaking residents. To ameliorate these issues, the AOT should coordinate with the responsible transit service providers to regularly post service updates online in multiple languages and provide flyers or handouts at bus stops in multiple languages for long term route changes.** • Community members living in rural areas expressed a need for an increase in affordable, reliable, and safe transportation opportunities from places of residence to essential destinations. Residents desire greater connectivity between small towns and urban areas for shuttle and bus services, and for more affordable and more frequently available taxi and TNC service to provide access to medical appointments. Community members also discussed the need for more extensive and well-maintained bike/ped infrastructure to enable safe access and connectivity to school, affordable housing, and workplaces**.** These are complementary strategies to transit services. **The AOT and RPCs should work together to facilitate the investment and deployment of affordable commuter bus/shuttle options, safe and well-maintained bike/ped infrastructure, and consider continuing or increasing subsidies for taxi, TNC, or micro transit riders to commuter and essential services such as medical appointments for underserved populations to enable greater, and more reliable transportation connectivity, especially in rural areas.**

Task 4 Component	Task 2 and 3 Findings
	• Community members serving as cultural or language facilitators have struggled to provide greater access to information and service resources for non-English speakers due to inaccessibility resulting from structural barriers at the government level. **The AOT and RPCs should work together to improve accessibility by providing materials in culturally accessible formats and culturally appropriate languages and ensure that these materials are widely distributed through various mediums (e.g., flyers, on agency website, social media).** To reduce language barriers and improve accessibility for community members with disabilities, agencies should include translation capabilities and visual and auditory aides at engagement events, provide accessible accommodations, and include community advocacy organizations at outreach events to foster trust and facilitate honest conversations with community members. To provide language support, cultural interpretation, and facilitate access to essential services and systems for non-English-speaking community members, agencies could additionally consider working with younger community members with English language skills at engagement events. Agencies should continue to fairly compensate all translators, advocacy organizations, and cultural liaisons for their time when providing community services. • Community organizations expressed that they were unaware of equity-improvement policies or programs in place for equitable service provision at the AOT, and that community organizations focused more on procedural equity while the AOT focused more on service delivery. **This represents an opportunity for overlap or better integration of procedural equity in service provision, and opportunities for collaboration between the AOT and community organizations to facilitate more equitable service provision.**

1.14 PILLAR 4 CORRECTIVE EQUITY: PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Framing questions:

- How will future actions (investments, policies, etc.) deliver equitable outcomes?
- Are there any efforts to include equity-based measures in project scoring and investment priorities?

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Findings

Needs: What Should Happen	• National Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ **Agencies should consider incorporating multiple equity-oriented prioritization criteria** (e.g., improved access to destinations used by and benefiting communities of concern, and community support of project) in the project prioritization/selection process that focus on mitigating inequity, improving existing conditions, and incorporating communities of concern into the planning process[35] (Task 2, National Insights).
	  ○ Agencies should **evaluate the benefits (added points) and detriments (subtracted points)** of potential projects with respect to a variety of equity-focused demographic groups (e.g., race, income, geographic location, disability, LEP) (Task 2, National Insights).
	  ○ **Through adjustments in project weighting, prioritize funding to projects/plans that address disproportionate or detrimental impacts identified by equity analysis and brought on by current transportation system** (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices).
	  ○ Agencies can use project prioritization methods to **focus investments in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged populations** most-reliant on public transportation and similar services to reduce service inequities and improve outcomes for communities of concern. Agencies should provide documentation and evidence of how a project improves equity outcomes and meets the needs of disadvantaged communities (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices).
	
	• Prioritization Practices/Guidance from Engagement:
	  ○ AOT stakeholders advocated to include an equity framework with equity-focused criteria in the project prioritization process. **To determine equity-focused criteria, VAPDA recommended that the AOT review national best practices, determine which populations are likely to use/rely on a given project, consider the impacts of historic disinvestment in certain areas, and incorporate greater support for rural areas lacking resources and staff** (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ The AOT, RPCs, and community organizations requested greater data availability (e.g., socioeconomic, demographic, and equity-based data) to help with project decisions. Similar to the needs identified in Pillar 1 (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ Utilize local information to supplement census data for planning efforts (e.g., data from Town Clerk, school lunch data, school transportation data, etc.). Provide insights on how best to use this data to make the process as consistent as possible but also reflect the local conditions. (Task 3, RPCs).

Existing Offerings: What is Happening	• AOT and RPC Current Practices: ○ Project prioritization/selection is guided by the *VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization Process (VPSP2) program*, which dictates how projects are prioritized and how funding is allocated, using safety, asset condition, mobility and connectivity, economic access, resiliency, regional community,

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Findings

	environment, and health access as evaluation criteria. The prioritization process does not include equity explicitly or include a process for identifying disadvantaged communities or needs (Task 2, RPCs, Task 2, AOT).
	
	• Current prioritization strategy challenges:
	  ○ VAPDA representative noted that the AOT treated rural communities with limited resources the same as communities with far more resources (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ RPCs voiced that the VPSP2 process standardized the prioritization process, but didn't include local voice in the process, wasn't clear on how active mode safety issues were evaluated and didn't have an explicit equity element (Task 3, RPCs).
	  ○ There is considerable variation in how RPCs consider, understand, prioritize, and evaluate equity in the decision making process. RPCs use both qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure and consider equity. RPCs acknowledge there is room for improvement and that in some cases equity is not considered (Task 3, RPCs).
	  ○ Some members of community organizations felt there should be less focus on maintenance and more focus on expanding access (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ Some RPCs requested greater guidance for *VTrans' Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) process* (a transportation planning program designed to support public participation and transportation planning that is conducted via a partnership between the AOT and the RPCs)[37] to consider and prioritize equity in the community engagement and decision making processes (Task 3, RPCs).
	
	• Prioritization Techniques and Strategies to Address Needs:
	  ○ The AOT leverages federal and state funds and cost shares with partners (e.g., Human Services) to provide more resources to address public transit rider needs (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ In addition to quantitative metrics used to evaluate the impact of projects during the prioritization process, qualitative information is collected through public engagement events facilitated with local stakeholders including RPCs, local municipalities, local boards through providers, and citizens and law enforcement who engage the public together (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ To ensure impacts for all populations are considered, the AOT and RPCs utilize the appropriate actions from Pillars 1 and 2. These include equitable engagement strategies: conduct engagement at fairs and schools, forums, and mobility committees, remove language barriers, provide compensation, and focus engagement efforts on key populations or areas of concern (Task 3, Stakeholder).

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Findings
Gaps/ Opportunities: Difference Between Needs and Existing Offerings; Potential Growth Opportunities	• In collaboration with RPCs, **the AOT should incorporate equity-based prioritization criteria into the VPSP2 program that focus on mitigating inequity (past burdens and injustices and current conditions), improving existing conditions, and incorporating communities of concern into the planning process.** Agencies could evaluate the benefits and detriments of potential projects with respect to equity-focused demographic groups and should consider how similar projects in the past have positively or negatively impacted diverse populations. • RPC staff and community members identified a lack of transparency in how the transportation system is funded, what the composition of funding is across different program or areas, what tradeoffs are made, where local collaboration occurs, and who makes the final decisions. Several groups voiced concerns that urban areas seemed to be receiving a disproportionate amount of investment in comparison to rural areas. In response to this**, the AOT and RPCs should work towards implementing greater prioritization and funding practice transparency, including a report back of decision making rationale, and providing time and space for discussions with community groups to clarify questions about how and why decisions were made.** The AOT and RPCs could also provide greater clarity on their websites, on project sites, and at community meetings about the timeline of major decisions, including when, where, and how community members can voice their opinions. Lastly, agencies should make greater efforts to communicate to community members and RPCs about the methodology used in the project prioritization process and provide opportunities for feedback on these methodologies (Task 3, Stakeholder, Task 3 RPCs). • **An additional opportunity exists between the AOT and RPCs to improve alignment and coordination with one another regarding the VPSP2 program and AOT Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) process**. Education efforts on the AOT's behalf to better communicate the function and design of the VPSP2 program could improve transparency and understanding for RPCs. Both agencies could additionally consider collaboration opportunities for the development and conduct of these two processes to better consider and prioritize equity in the community engagement and decision making processes (Task 3, RPCs).

1.15 PILLAR 4 CORRECTIVE EQUITY: ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Framing questions:

- How will progress toward equitable outcomes be monitored and measured?
- What indicators are used? What is currently being done to track performance measures across communities?

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Notes

Needs: What Should Happen	• National Best Practices/Guidance:
	  ○ One way to evaluate the equity of past expenditures: segment projects by mode for separate analysis and determine if investment spending was allocated equitably based on the distribution of disadvantaged populations, and the current use of each mode by disadvantaged populations (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices).
	  ○ After integrating equitable practices in the project prioritization process, agencies should conduct regional analyses to **monitor and evaluate equity outcomes for disadvantaged populations to see if inequality is decreasing and to see if equity prioritization measures are effective** (Task 2, National Insights).[35]
	  ○ **To measure and monitor outcomes: select performance measures that enable agencies to evaluate overall service performance as well as service performance for specific communities of concern. Chosen performance measures should measure the impact of transportation system performance on disadvantaged populations, quantitatively evaluate differences between population groups, and document evidence of disproportionate incidence of poor performance for communities of concern** (Task 2, Guidance and Successful Practices).
	
	• Methods of monitoring and managing progress towards equitable outcomes:
	  ○ Public Transit operators noted that rider surveys and annual route performance reports could be used as evaluation metrics for accountability (Task 3, Stakeholder).
	  ○ **To implement an equity-based framework: Stakeholders suggested early coordination, continuous collaboration, having a flexible, accessible, and intentional model, providing training, and integrating the framework into onboarding, having dedicated staff people to be the equity point person or to work**

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Notes
	with specific populations, and having a process for improving the framework (Task 3, Stakeholder). ○ RPCs reported widespread interest in reporting spending measures by geographic region or per capita in order to put numbers into context and compare geographic equity of spending (Task 3, RPCs). ○ Utilize leaders or champions of the equity framework within the AOT: Policy, Planning, and Intermodal Development Division, Planning coordinators, Public Transit, DMV, Construction and Materials in Highway Division, the Project Delivery Bureau, Outreach and Communications, Environmental Planning, Direct reports of Chief Engineer of Highway Division, and specific agency leaders (e.g., equity committee of VAPDA members). (Task 3, Stakeholder). • Needs with respect to monitoring and managing progress towards equitable outcomes: ○ The Highway Division and VAPDA requested resources, including expressing the **need for a clear definition of equity** in tangible or operational terms, data, a survey for tracking outcomes, tools, or processes to be shared agencywide, and greater support by the AOT in following policies/guidance already developed (Task 3, Stakeholder). ○ Regarding the Equity Framework: the framework should be flexible enough to apply to capital projects and ongoing programs/services. Some stakeholders requested clear guidance or a checklist to implement the Equity Framework internally, and others wanted the framework to become integrated into the agency's culture and get everyone onboard with goals and objectives (Task 3, Stakeholder).
Existing Offerings: What is Happening	• There are several equity-based federal regulations and policies which dictate the goals, metrics, and requirements that must be tracked for compliance purposes. This includes the following key mandates: ○ Historical Federal Regulations/Policies: ▪ *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (Title VI) prohibits intentional discrimination based on race, color, and national origin for recipients of federal funding. UD DOT Title VI regulations additionally cover unintentional actions or actions of discrimination, and track and monitor the impact of federally designated funds on underrepresented groups (Task 2, National Efforts).

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Notes
	▪ *1994 Executive Order 12898* – Federal Actions to Address EJ in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations provided directives for federal agencies to create Environmental Justice strategies which identify and analyze the health and environmental impacts of federally funded projects on minority and low-income communities (Task 2, National Efforts). ▪ *2000 Executive Order 13166* – Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency requires agencies to provide federally funded, accessible services, programs, and activities for LEP populations, but doesn't require an analysis of disproportionate or detrimental impacts (Task 2, National Efforts). o Recent Federal Regulations/Policies: ▪ *2012 USDOT Order 5610.2 (a) and FHWA Order 6640.23 (a)* – Complementary orders updating agency EJ orders, considers EJ principles through both agencies' programs, policies, and planning efforts, highlights importance of considering principles early in planning efforts to reduce adverse effects on disadvantaged communities (Task 2, National Efforts). ▪ *2015 FHWA Environmental Justice Reference Guide* – Created during the Obama-Biden Administration, provided state DOTs and RPCs guidance on complying with EJ requirements (Task 2, National Efforts). ▪ *2021 Justice40 initiative* – Goal of delivering 40% of federal investments in climate and clean energy (including sustainable transportation) to disadvantaged communities. Includes interim guidance for federal agencies including documentation detailing how agencies can identify benefits for included programs, determine the distribution of benefits, and calculate and report on the 40% goal. Biden-Harris Administration released *Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)*; a mapping tool used to help federal agencies identify disadvantaged communities as part of Justice40 (Task 2, National Efforts). ▪ *2021 Executive Order 13895* – Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government: USDOT released

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Notes
	RFI on transportation equity data that could aid USDOT in evaluating transportation program and policy inequities (Task 2, National Efforts). ▪ *2022 US DOT Equity Action Plan* – Recognizes equity in transportation planning with four equity actions: wealth creation, intervention through direct hands-on technical support, empowering communities in decision making, and expanding access to affordable transportation options to bring economic mobility and transportation benefits. Introduces the use of equity performance indicators: • State DOTs and the largest 100 MPOs must adopt a quantitative equity screening component to their STIP/TIP development processes by 2030. • By 2025, increase the number of USDOT discretionary grant applications by 5% from disadvantaged communities who have never applied for USDOT funding before. • Increase USDOT direct contract funds to small, disadvantaged businesses from 18.2% in 2021 to 22% by 2026. • Reduce national transportation cost burden by 5%, including transportation travel cost as a percent of income, by 2030 (Task 2, National Efforts). • AOT and RPC Current Practices: o The AOT has Title VI-specific staff members to maintain statistical data by race and national origin, conduct reviews, investigate complaints, and provide a Division and Department report identifying additional needs and patterns of non-compliance (Task 2, AOT). RPCs additionally follow the required monitoring put forth by Title VI. Dashboards can be used to document performance measures, but equity is not explicitly measured or monitored via the dashboards (Task 2, RPCs, Task 2, AOT). • No community organizations knew of evaluation or accountability strategies for equity used by the AOT (Task 3, Stakeholder).
Gaps/ Opportunities: Difference Between Needs and Existing	• Considering the lack of information understood by community organizations about AOT evaluation or accountability strategies for equity, **there is opportunity for greater transparency and greater provision of information regarding methodologies used to account for equity**

Task 4 Component	Tasks 2 & 3 Notes
Offerings; Potential Growth Opportunities	**in AOT service performance monitoring and management**. In addition to internal AOT reporting on Title VI compliance, the AOT (and RPCs) could implement additional public reporting and provide opportunities for community members to ask questions and foster dialogue about reporting metrics. • • **Both the AOT and RPCs utilize interactive dashboards to monitor key performance metrics. If equity were incorporated as a performance measure or lens applied to existing performance measures, it could be better monitored and measured** via accessible dashboards made public to community organizations and community members. The AOT should work with RPCs to conduct regional analyses to see the impact of equity-focused projects on communities of concern and monitor the effects to determine if inequities have decreased. • Among AOT employees and community organizations, there were various interpretations of the definition of equity, as well as how equity was measured and understood at the agency level. **There is an opportunity in the development of an equity framework to define equity on operational terms, collect data that indicates the equity of service performance, utilize surveys, tools, and processes to track outcomes and share monitoring metrics agencywide, and emphasize the importance of adherence to preexisting policies and guidance used to emphasize equitable outcomes.** • Stakeholders reported a desire for framework flexibility so it could be applied to both capital projects as well as ongoing programs, and many felt that clear guidance would be imperative to the successful implementation of an equity-based framework. In terms of incorporating an equity framework into the project prioritization, decision making, and planning processes, **the AOT and RPCs should emphasize early coordination among key stakeholders (including community members), continuous collaboration, flexibility, and accessibility, have dedicated staff to work with and facilitate dialogue with key community groups, and integrate an iterative feedback process to improve the framework.**

APPENDIX D. QUICK TIPS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Basics

1. Community Engagement is not about listening, it is about partnership and collaboration with community members with lived-experience that serves as potent expertise.
2. For providing expertise and time, community members should be fairly compensated.
3. Each community is different; be adaptive, respectful, and move at a pace that facilitates trust, collaboration, and feedback.
4. Community Engagement is based on trust - without this, engagement is futile.

Preparing Yourself and Your Agency

1. Determine the readiness of your agency to engage the community:
    - Are you ready to make changes based on community input?
    - Do you have experience and knowledge of your target community and its culture?
    - Do you understand historical and ongoing conditions that contribute to inequity in your community?
    - Have your staff addressed interpersonal racism and classism that impede inclusive processes for building relationships, collaboration and engagement of marginalized communities?
2. Use the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership as a tool to map your progress
3. Allocate staff time and resources to community engagement - for participant stipends, childcare, venue rentals, food costs, research, and most importantly, follow-through.
4. Understand the historical context of your engagement - how has your agency, and other related agencies, engaged with this community? What was the result? Why?
5. Begin forming relationships with stakeholder organizations to better understand different populations and to establish rapport

Making a Plan

1. Be proactive at identifying community leaders, partners, or representative professionals to assist in planning - and be sure to compensate them for their work!
2. Work with stakeholder organizations, as well as related state agencies, to understand how community engagement can be beneficial to their goals and build on their work - and how it may relate to their community engagement plans and goals.

3. Ensure that your engagement goals include a process of integration of community recommendations in implementation plans, or at minimum, the inclusion of recommendations as an important factor in final decisions. If this can not be accomplished, reconsider the need for engagement.
4. Ask yourself: “What would a partner need to make decisions or provide input on a project on this topic?”
5. Prepare to communicate the full scope and process of a project in layman’s terms, including; the range of stakeholders involved and how each stakeholder’s input will influence the project, what specific input is desired from the community and how it will be used, timelines and avenues of community engagement, and timelines of project implementation.
6. In consultation with community stakeholders, identify common barriers to participation in target communities and develop relationships with relevant agencies and service providers that can alleviate these barriers.
7. Establish communication channels *and* documentation processes to account for diverse content and methods of communication you may receive. This may include:
    - Phone lines and voice-mail boxes, photo and video submissions, email, text messaging, social media forums, online forms and surveys, mail-based surveys and information, and in-person communications outside of traditional public meetings.
8. Create an outreach plan in partnership with community stakeholders, using local knowledge and available datasets.
9. Work with stakeholders to develop language and communications that will be well-received by your target population. In addition to outreach materials, this may include translation of key documents and summarization of lengthy or complex information.

Making Connections

1. Begin with mutual connections - and make further connections based on their relationships.
2. Spend time at local events and service organizations to build trust and recognition
3. Work with stakeholders to identify high-traffic locations for flyering, tabling, or impromptu conversations

Engaging Respectfully & Meaningfully

1. During conversation, issues may emerge that are not relevant to your engagement goals - rather than ignoring these issues, connect community members to relevant service providers when possible.
2. Allow community members to contribute in ways that feel meaningful and appropriate to them. Sometimes, these contributions may be emotional or non-technical.
3. When appropriate, create “affinity spaces” for engagement that is comfortable and safe

4. Establish and clearly communicate expectations and guidelines for participation

Maintaining Relationships, Building Trust, and Fostering a Culture of Partnership

5. When possible, develop opportunities for community members to become formally integrated into decision making processes through methods such as compensated board or committee appointments or hiring community members into managerial and executive roles.
6. If there are any reports that emerge from engagement with community members, offer opportunities for community members to give feedback, and make edits based on this feedback.
7. Ensure any "deliverables" of engagement are accessible to community members

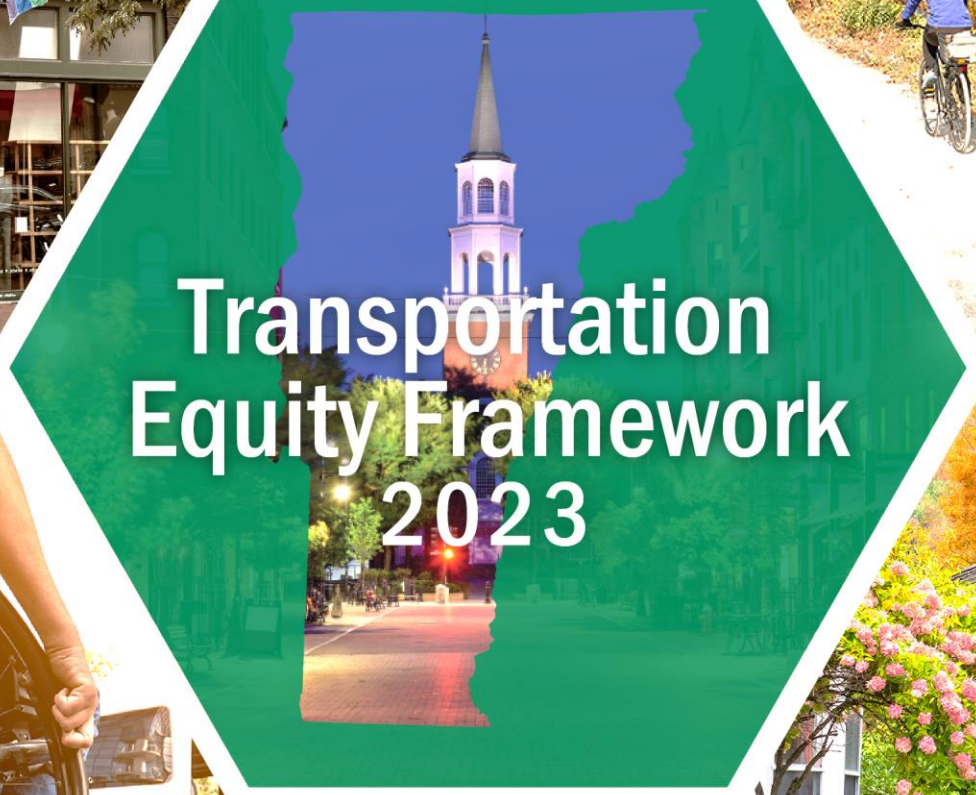
Provide tools, resources, information, and connections that will allow community members to take action and influence decisions without needing to rely on you as an intermediary.

APPENDIX E. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Direct Engagement Summary
Direct Engagement Conclusion Presentation
Regional Planning Commission Engagement Summary
Stakeholder Interview Report

Task 3 Appendix – Direct Community Engagement

December 2022



Transportation Equity Framework 2023

VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

VAPDA Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies

RSG the science of insight

Report Title:

Task 3 - Direct Community Engagement for Transportation Equity

Report Prepared by:

The Rights & Democracy Institute

Report Prepared for:

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VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION 1
2.0 DIRECT FINDINGS, THEMES, AND OPPORTUNITIES 3
2.1 OVERALL TRENDS 3
2.1.1 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE 3
2.1.2 PUBLIC TRANSIT 3
2.1.3 OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND INCENTIVES 3
2.1.4 ACCESS TO ESSENTIALS 3
2.1.5 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION 4
2.2 BENNINGTON 4
2.2.1 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW 4
2.2.2 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE 4
2.2.3 PUBLIC TRANSIT 5
2.2.4 ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL NEEDS 5
2.2.5 PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION 6
2.2.6 OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND INCENTIVES 6
2.3 BURLINGTON & WINOOSKI 6
2.3.1 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW 6
2.3.2 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE 7
2.3.3 PUBLIC TRANSIT 7
2.3.4 ACCESS TO ESSENTIALS 8
2.3.5 PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION 8
2.3.6 OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND INCENTIVES 8
2.4 NORTHEAST KINGDOM 8
2.4.1 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW 8
2.4.2 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE 9
2.4.3 PUBLIC TRANSIT 9
2.4.4 ACCESS TO ESSENTIALS 9
2.4.5 PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION 9
2.4.6 OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND INCENTIVES 10
2.5 RUTLAND 10
2.5.1 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW 10
2.5.2 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE 10
2.5.3 PUBLIC TRANSIT 11
2.5.4 ACCESS TO ESSENTIALS 12
2.5.5 PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION 12

2.5.6 OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND INCENTIVES....12

3.0 ENGAGEMENT INSIGHT AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 13

3.1 ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES AND EXPERIENCE ACROSS COMMUNITIES....13

3.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS ABOUT TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS....14

3.3 ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY AS A PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR....15

3.4 COMMUNITY MEMBERS MUST BE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR TIME AND LOCAL EXPERTISE....16

3.5 PARTICIPATION BURNOUT....16

3.6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE HOLISTIC AND ADDRESS IMMEDIATE CONCERNS....17

3.7 INFORMATION MUST BE SHARED AND RECEIVED USING A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS....17

3.8 BE OPEN TO NON-PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE AND INFORMATION....18

3.9 OFFER EDUCATION AND INFORMATION TO PROVIDE CONTEXT....19

3.10 PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THOSE WANTING TO ADDRESS ISSUES....19

3.11 LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS....20

3.12 VARY THE SCALE OF OUTREACH....20

3.13 OUTREACH METHODS....21

3.14 COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND EVENTS ARE ONLY ONE STRATEGY....22

4.0 RPC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATUS..... 23

4.1 ALLOCATE STAFF TIME AND RESOURCES TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT....23

4.2 TRUTHFULLY AND THOROUGHLY ASSESS THE CURRENT STATUS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP....23

4.3 ASSESS CURRENT CONTEXT, CHALLENGES, AND BARRIERS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT....24

4.4 PREPARE INFORMATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS....24

4.5 ENGAGE COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS EARLY....24

4.6 CREATE SPACE FOR INTERAGENCY COOPERATION....24

4.7 DEVELOP AND PRACTICE THE USE OF BIDIRECTIONAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS....25

4.8 HOW HAVE RPC'S BEEN INVOLVED IN RDI'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS?....25

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

ENDNOTES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

DAARA – Disabled Advocacy & Activism of the Rutland Area

DCF – Department for Children & Families

DEC – Department of Environmental Conservation

ESL – English as a Second Language

MVRT – Marble Valley Regional Transit

NEK – Northeast Kingdom

RCT – Rural Community Transportation

RDI – Rights & Democracy Institute

REJOICE – Rural Environmental Justice Opportunities Informed by Community Experts

1.0 INTRODUCTION

During the summer & fall of 2022, the Rights & Democracy Institute (RDI) conducted direct community engagement for the development of The Vermont Agency of Transportation's Transportation Equity Framework.

By working closely with four communities around the state of Vermont we gained a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of communities most affected by Environmental Justice issues. Environmental Justice refers to the equitable distribution of environmental benefits, burdens, and decision-making power. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income communities specifically, as well as older adults (those older than 65 years old), young adults (those younger than 30 years old) and rural communities, are disproportionately exposed to environmental injustices.

To address these inequities, it is essential to seek leadership and guidance from these 'marginalized communities' (communities that are systematically discriminated against and excluded from social, political and economic processes as a result and expression of unequal power relationships). In Vermont and nationally, these communities have been systematically excluded from governmental decision-making processes, further perpetuating inequities and a culture deprived of practice and positive experience with public participation. Furthermore, by focusing on communities that face compounding equity issues and working to eliminate barriers in these target communities, inevitably, barriers will be removed and conditions will be improved for those that may not fall within those target populations but still encounter barriers and injustices.

With this in mind, four communities were selected as target populations for testing and exploring various methods of community engagement. These sites were identified using tools such as government databases, mapping tools such as the Vermont Environmental Disparity Index (Panikkar 2021), and qualitative research conducted by members of RDI and REJOICE (Rural Environmental Justice Opportunities Informed by Community Experts). These target populations included: young adult BIPOC in Winooski and Burlington; residents of Bennington living in low-income housing; older adults and mobile-home park residents in the Northeast Kingdom; and low-income residents of the Rutland area. Community specific plans were developed in consultation with community leaders and liaisons in each respective region. In each community, we employed a variety of methods and techniques that can be seen below in Table 1 .

Our team was committed to prioritizing community knowledge, expertise, desires, priorities, needs and concerns. This approach was informed by the Center for Whole Communities' Whole Measures framework as well as the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Community Ownership. These frameworks push us to consider community members as balanced partners and to navigate socio-economic dynamics that limit their ability to meaningfully collaborate and engage in decision-making processes. Achieving these goals requires flexibility, openness, and a willingness to be guided by

community members. Throughout our work, we aimed to empower and honor people who are both learning and practicing using their voice as experts in this work, and to simultaneously shift the culture within government agencies to ultimately change the relationship between the government and communities in a positive way. Through this approach, while results expectedly varied, we found significant success in energizing community members to be active participants in group decision-making processes and public engagement and gained important insight about the challenges and barriers involved in this endeavor.

These efforts complement a parallel effort being funded by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Both agencies share an interest in engaging communities across the state to address equity and environmental justice issues. These efforts are being implemented in close partnership with the Center for Whole Communities.

Over the course of this work, RDI hosted 21 engagement activities across the state, with a total of 324 community participants. A complete list of engagement and outreach efforts can be found in the appendix.

TABLE 1: ENGAGEMENT METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION	LOCATIONS APPLIED
Participatory Mapping	The use of mapping as a visual aid to allow community members to communicate information about their environment.	Bennington, Rutland
Community Meetings, Focus Groups, and Forums	Group discussions with, facilitated dialogue, with or without educational guest speakers	All
Photovoice Challenge & Ceremony	The collection of perspectives through photos as taken and described by community members. This also included a ceremony where photos were celebrated, discussed, and evaluated by a panel of community-based judges, gamifying participation, and creating the basis for a focus group discussion	Winooski/ Burlington
Neighborhood Walks	Conversations that happen while walking (or using a wheelchair) around a community to ground conversations in local environments	Bennington
One-on-Ones with Community Leaders	Direct conversations with community leaders to gather information, receive guidance and feedback, and to understand and connect to local social networks	All
Facilitated Dialogue	Reciprocal dialogue between decision-makers and community members that allows for distribution of information and direct feedback.	Rutland
Assisted Public Participation	A collaborative effort of working with individuals to share information on processes, best-practices, and to support community members to effectively engage with public participation opportunities.	Bennington, Winooski/ Burlington, NEK

2.0 DIRECT FINDINGS, THEMES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

In each community, we identified unique barriers, impacts, and opportunities to improve equity in transportation. Overall trends have been identified but these trends are exhibited differently in each community.

2.1 OVERALL TRENDS

2.1.1 Transportation Infrastructure

- Well-lit and weather-resistant bus shelters were a frequently articulated desire for community members.
- Road maintenance is something that seems to primarily impact those with personal vehicles, who tend to be higher income individuals.
- Walking/wheel-chair riding seems to be the preferred method of transportation for most when available, but this depends on well maintained, expansive, and safe pedestrian infrastructure and affordable housing located within the vicinity of essential goods and services.

2.1.2 Public Transit

- Many community members see a need for extended schedules and expansion of public transportation routes. This is seen as necessary to address the needs of low-income community members who work and attend school early or late, and to provide access to social events and spaces.
- The emotional health, satisfaction, and skills of bus drivers were seen as critical to the safety and reliability of public transportation, and therefore valued by community members.
- Free use of public transportation was seen as a great benefit in the communities where buses were fare-free.

2.1.3 Other Transportation Services, Programs, and Incentives

- On-demand transportation, such as taxis or micro-transit, is often highly desired - especially for medical appointments - but is typically unavailable or unaffordable.
- Conversations on personal electric vehicles are typically met with disdain and concern in these communities; many find these initiatives to be out of reach due to costs and therefore unreasonable and inequitable

2.1.4 Access To Essentials

- Community members often brought up the difficulties associated with accessing physical and mental health care appointments and specialists in a timely and reliable manner.

2.1.5 Public Engagement and Communication

- It is unclear to the general public how they can give input, provide comments, or make complaints about transportation issues. Many experience hesitation and doubt their ability to meaningfully influence outcomes.
- Information about public transportation programs and other transportation services is not accessible to community members with limited English proficiency, and those without access to internet.

2.2 BENNINGTON

2.2.1 Community Overview

The Bennington area continues to suffer from challenges related to poverty, hardship from industries leaving the area and understaffed government services. These challenges include high rates of opioid related deaths and other substance use, lead and water contamination, and inadequate access to health care and desirable food limited by poor transportation and long distances. Engagement efforts in Bennington were focused on Willowbrook and Orchard Village, two affordable housing communities nestled within a web of highways. In these communities, residents and institutions have worked for years to increase opportunity and access to services like weatherization, repairs, mortgage and rental assistance, and small business loans and grants. They continue to work to overcome structural racism to address unequal access to burdens and benefits, including to healthy, joyful and dignified work, housing, and to information. The Willowbrook affordable housing community, a community with 75 homes inhabited mostly by families, identified barriers in accessing better job opportunities due to the limited bus schedule and in transporting middle and high school students to and from school. The community identified having some (though not enough) community members with vehicles willing to assist some community members without transportation with essential needs such as grocery shopping and transporting children to school, having access to state-funded rides to some medical appointments and being within walking distance to local shops as assets to their location. Orchard Village (formerly Applegate) affordable housing community, a community with 106 homes, experienced similar challenges and conditions.

2.2.2 Transportation Infrastructure

The most commonly mentioned infrastructure related improvements in this community were focused on improving safety and access for those walking to grocery stores and school and traveling to work. Residents reported that children as young as 11 have to walk along a busy limited access highway and cross the 4-lane highway without a pedestrian signal or crossing guard to reach school. In winters, as children walk in dark, inclement conditions, this feels especially dangerous. Children reported feeling anxious, stressed, and scared on these daily commutes. “My child has asthma, it takes them 40 minutes to walk to the middle school 1.7 miles away”, one participant noted. Not only did this endanger children's health and education, but also threatened the wellbeing of families; “If kids don’t go to school on bad

weather days, after so many absences, DCF is called. Then you've got to deal with them." In addition to school bus service, residents requested stop lights with pedestrian signals or pedestrian paths and bridges that allowed children and families to safely walk to school and grocery stores.

Adults were also in need of expanded walking infrastructure; many explained that unofficial trails through wooded areas, including an abandoned railroad trestle, were used to transport groceries from stores or food shelves.

There were also mixed feelings regarding a pedestrian path that connected the Orchard Village and Willowbrook neighborhoods; some felt that it allowed greater access to goods and services such as the food shelf and elementary school, while others worried that increased foot traffic led to more drug-related activity around their community, which they saw as a potential safety issue.

Residents reported a desire to have increased access to free or low-cost bus transportation. Residents also would like the bus to run later and start earlier to accommodate various work shifts and medical appointments and wished that the bus allowed more ready access to locations for recreation, such as parks in the area.

2.2.3 Public Transit

Public buses were appreciated by community members, though they had frustrations with the reliability of the bus; "The bus schedule isn't reliable. It only comes every 3 hours. The Green Mountain bus comes through… It's always 10-20 min late." Others also complained that the schedules for the public bus did not line up with school schedules, making it challenging for kids to use this service when school buses were not available.

On the topic of school buses, Willowbrook was not serviced by a non-special services school bus at all at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. While some children chose to walk and ride the bus that serviced Orchard Village, this bus was reportedly already crowded, with some children sitting on the floors. Considering the dangers of walking to school, this was a big issue for many residents. Additionally, upon hearing rumors of a bus driver strike, individuals became concerned that they would not be able to access work, drop their children off at school, or access other essential services.

Through the course of community meetings held in Willowbrook and Orchard Village neighborhoods, residents shared information on changes to the bus schedule that addressed some issues for schoolchildren, stemming from initiative taken both by school officials and by participants themselves. This demonstrated the value both of advocacy with local institutions and use of strong personal networks to generate small changes in transportation routes and schedules that had important positive consequences for as many as 50 community youth.

2.2.4 Access to essential needs

Residents described challenges in accessing schools and grocery stores, challenges with traveling to specialized medical appointments and the lack of transportation options to places of leisure, such as lakes and green space. Middle and high school students were not receiving access to the school

bus to get to and from school. Parents in Willowbrook explained that students must have a qualifying medical condition or have an Individual Education Plan to access the school bus. Orchard Village parents reported concerns for their children's' safety while on the bus as the bus is overcrowded and the bus company understaffed. Willowbrook and Orchard Village residents identified walking to shop for groceries as a hardship as walking limited the number of groceries residents can transport home from the grocery store. Residents explained that taking the Green Mountain Express bus to grocery shop furthers this hardship as the bus allows a limited number of bags per family. One Willowbrook parent identified that she had to push her child's surgery off for 1 year because she did not have transportation to ensure her child would make the scheduled 5am surgery and follow up appointments. Adult residents reported feeling "stuck" and "trapped" in their communities, and parents reported feeling their children did not have enough positive options to spend their time, which they feared promoted negative behaviors and activities. Both Orchard Village and Willowbrook residents reported they would benefit greatly from being able to get out of the community to go to local and state parks to engage in various recreational activities.

2.2.5 Private Transportation

Most residents lacked private vehicles and conversations on this topic were limited. Participants estimated that less than half the households in both communities had access to functional vehicles. The price of gas was named as a barrier, as were concerns about the cost of and access to repairs for hybrid or electric vehicles.

2.2.6 Other Transportation Services, Programs, and Incentives

There was not great awareness of additional programs, and these were not discussed in depth. Residents were aware of–and some had used–the availability of rides for individuals back home from the emergency room through the regional transportation authority. They said, however, that it was difficult to meet the 48-hour turnaround requirement for scheduling requests for emergent medical appointments for sick children, or for the agency to accommodate early arrival for scheduled procedures, especially at the nearest regional medical centers (Albany and Dartmouth) for example.

2.3 BURLINGTON & WINOOSKI

2.3.1 Community Overview

Winooski and Burlington have the largest BIPOC community in Vermont, including significant populations of immigrants and refugees with primary languages including Arabic, Mai-Mai, Swahili, and Vietnamese. In Burlington and Winooski, 11.8% and 21.5% (respectively) of people surveyed in the US Census American Community Survey from 2015-2019 were listed as 'Foreign Born', while 13.5% and 26%, respectively, spoke a language other than English at home. This county also ranked as the youngest county in Vermont, with a median age of 36.5, and is more densely populated and urban than most communities in the state.

We focused our engagement on this community, targeting youth aged 16-29 in an effort to hear a voice that is often marginalized and disconnected from civic processes. Younger

individuals in this community can often speak and read English more fluently and tend to act as cultural interpreters and brokers, providing language support and facilitating access to all kinds of systems for older generations and family members. Members in these communities have worked to create opportunity and access to resources for years but have often faced ongoing structural racism and limitations to language access in government systems at all levels. These community members typically walk and ride the bus as their primary modes of transportation while some share cars with family members or rely on family members to provide transportation.

2.3.2 Transportation Infrastructure

Many members of the BIPOC community expressed appreciation for the presence of goods and services in close proximity to their housing, noting that they would walk across the street to get groceries and other necessities. Typically, walking was a preferred mode of transportation if their destinations were within a few miles, and they saw walking as a healthy and easy option.

Bike paths were seen primarily as a recreational resource that is both beneficial to the environment, and for participants' social lives.

For those who drove personal vehicles, road maintenance was also seen as a major benefit that made driving easier, safer, and more enjoyable.

2.3.3 Public Transit

Public buses are widely used by this community to go to work, school, and access other services and goods. One key issue which arose was around communication; route closures and changes were not adequately communicated, from this community's perspective. The website, they said, is difficult to navigate especially for those that spoke English as a second language. Many found Google maps to give the most accurate information about routes and wished there was more direct information shared such as flyers at bus stops, or announcements from drivers. People also found that, at times, the bus could be unreliable. Late pick-ups or missed buses due to a bus's early departure, could cause issues, especially for those who relied on the bus to commute to work.

The most commonly proposed change for the bus was an extension of hours, as participants explained that the bus should operate later into the night to accommodate those who work late or night shifts. Later bus schedules would also allow for residents to attend social gatherings and spaces. One Burlington resident explained that “on nights where I’m working and I don't have money for an Uber, that’s when I get stressed. If I miss the bus, what do I do? Who do I call? I work at night so when I miss the last bus, there's nothing to do. Family members aren't awake [to give me a ride]. I have to plan ahead for that. So, I have a family member on speed dial and get a quick loan for an Uber.” Others explained that they made their schedules, including work schedules, around bus schedules as much as they could - though for some, this was not an option. Extended hours for the bus were also seen as a way to increase social and physical wellbeing: “When I lived in Houston, we would go to the club Friday, Saturday, Sunday - now we can’t go out to dance because we can’t pay for a ride home”.

However, in general the bus was greatly appreciated. Free access was venerated, and some were concerned about the bus returning to fee-based service; “The bus is the best option and the introduction of fare-free service in response to the pandemic made a huge difference for this community. To be able to not have to pay means you don’t have to worry about constantly taking the bus because it does add up, especially taking it two ways or taking it round trip.” Residents also appreciated that several buses were electric, explaining that it was better for the environment and not as loud.

Other important requests and concerns included a desire for clean buses and bus shelters that protected riders from rain and cold while allowing them to signal their presence to bus drivers.

2.3.4 Access to Essentials

There was little conversation on specific gaps in community members' access to essential goods and services.

2.3.5 Private Transportation

While the bus is valued by many, private car ownership is more sought after in this community and seen as an important element of individual freedom; “Having a car and having steady transportation; that’s like freedom to me. [Riding the bus] limits what you can do when you want to do it. I want to be able to visit family outside of Burlington, but I can’t.” On-demand transportation such as taxis and uber occasionally allowed for the freedom and flexibility that many desired, but because of cost this option was typically reserved for medical appointments or used only as a last resort.

2.3.6 Other Transportation Services, Programs, and Incentives

There was little conversation about other transportation programs or initiatives.

2.4 NORTHEAST KINGDOM

2.4.1 Community Overview

Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom (NEK) is proudly Vermont’s most rural and natural-resource dependent region. It is also one of the lowest-income regions of the state and is the site of the only currently active landfill. Additionally, the median age in this region is higher than Vermont's already high average. According to the 2010 Census, about 25% of the NEKs population was aged 65 and older, and projections estimate that this age distribution would sharply increase (Northeastern Vermont Development Association, NEK Local Food System, Center for an Agricultural Economy 2016). We engaged primarily in the Newport area, though outreach and events occasionally included the broader region of the NEK.

For community members living in rural locations, personal transportation is often critical if they are to access essential goods and services. In one mobile home park that had a frequently visited grocery store located across the street, most residents still chose to drive their personal vehicles, especially in colder weather. Age, income, and disabilities often complicate these transportation norms.

2.4.2 Transportation Infrastructure

Primary infrastructure issues in this community included housing, road conditions, and safe walking and biking infrastructure. Several mobile home residents brought up issues of flooding, ice, and snow that made it difficult to access their vehicles, or to drive or walk. They explained that the flooding was typically caused by the design of internal park roads. They suggested that park management should work more closely with state agencies to ensure that roads are built in a responsible manner and to ensure that park owners are accountable to residents.

There were also more general comments about poor road quality impacting the region. Many explained that the quality of the roads damaged their cars, leading to expensive repairs. One resident expressed concern about frequent travel of trucks going to and from the Coventry Landfill, wondering about the impact it had on their town's roads.

While it was understood that creation of bike lanes across the NEK would be an ambitious project, many explained that they felt content with riding on the shoulders of roads, though they said that oftentimes shoulders had debris or plants that made this more difficult and dangerous. One participant with vision issues explained that he commuted daily by bike and was constantly worried that an unexpected hazard could throw him into traffic, or off his bike.

2.4.3 Public Transit

Rural Community Transportation (RCT) services the area, but many participants possessed little information about the services offered, and those that did found the service to be insufficient and inconvenient. Since much of our engagement was in Newport, many participants were frustrated with the lack of routes that allowed them to access other areas of the NEK or beyond. For those living in areas serviced by RCT's free shuttle and bus, many wished for greater interconnectivity between small towns and more urban areas. Several noted with excitement that freight trains could be equipped to transport people by adding a passenger car.

2.4.4 Access to Essentials

As in Rutland, access to healthcare was the most commonly cited issue for participants. For those without Medicaid, living outside of more urban centers meant that they would need to own a car, rely on friends or family, or spend money on a taxi to receive specialized care, or to visit the nearest hospital.

Others also mentioned that jobs could be difficult to come by and suggested that transportation into bigger cities would allow them to access larger job markets. Others suggested that local jobs or remote jobs could solve this problem as well.

2.4.5 Private Transportation

For many older Vermonters personal transportation is inaccessible due to disabilities or the cost of owning a vehicle. For those who are able to use others' cars, or to afford their own cars, cars can still be a burden; "I have to pay $300-$400 each month for my car, plus the cost of gas and insurance. It's hard to pay that on a fixed income". In addition to the financial burden of car ownership, the labor of maintaining a vehicle and the work of maintaining driveways proved to be a large

challenge for older Vermonters with physical challenges. For older adults that lived in subsidized housing and assisted-living communities, parking was in short supply. This inhibited their ability to own and access a car.

2.4.6 Other Transportation Services, Programs, and Incentives

For RCT's dial-a-ride and other on-demand services, residents must request rides two days in advance and stick to planned schedules that can leave them stranded if something changes; "I had RCT take me to a medical appointment earlier this year. When I got there, things took an hour longer than I expected and RCT said that they had to leave. I was stranded and I had to call a friend to drive 3 hours to come get me". Despite some negative sentiments about RCT, there was, overall, a great interest in on-demand transit for those that did not have access to dial-a-ride, especially for medical appointments.

There also seemed to be a large gap in what people knew was available and what was actually available. When asked about communication preferences, many explained that they did not have great familiarity with computers and often did not have access to computers or the internet. To attend a virtual workshop, several participants met at local organizations such as the St. J Community Hub to access their internet. Additionally, community members receiving information shared via phone or mail, or even direct contact, were often distrustful if it was not delivered by a trusted source.

2.5 RUTLAND

2.5.1 Community Overview

Rutland was selected, in part, due to it having been identified by the Vermont Environmental Disparity Index as a community with some of the highest cumulative environmental disparity impacts in the state. Rutland county's median household income is 10% lower than the average for Vermont and is about 11% lower per capita in Rutland County than it is overall in Vermont as well. In regards to transportation issues, the REJOICE project had previously identified that the area's transportation deficits contribute to a variety of negative outcomes such as difficulty accessing healthcare, inability to access fresh foods, fewer opportunities to participate in social events, sparse public transportation within the county outside of the city, inadequate ridesharing infrastructure, non-contiguous sidewalks and decreased city walkability, increased pollution, and more.

2.5.2 Transportation Infrastructure

Infrastructure was a central concern for community members, with a primary focus on sidewalk and road conditions. For many, walking was the primary mode of transportation, even for those who frequently used the bus. Walking proved to be a dangerous affair, especially for those with disabilities. Community members explained that sidewalks were filled with cracks and ruptures, ended without off-ramps, and in the winter, months were often covered in ice or snow. One participant who used an electric wheelchair explained her experience and fear of getting stuck on a sidewalk; "The

weather absolutely inhibits my ability to do anything. Last winter I was stuck on the corner of Wales and Washington and a police officer passed me 3 times and did not stop. I could get killed on sidewalks. I don't care; I go on the road - a car is going to either hit me or not - but I have no other options. And you know what, the roads are not much better. So, it is a huge problem". Notably, for those that used electric wheelchairs, using the chair was their only form of transportation in Rutland as they explained that there were no accessible vehicles offering services. Individuals of differing walking abilities, wheelchair or not, complained that the sidewalks on Route 7 were not continuous. That is, even when walking to a destination on the same side, there are sections where one must cross the extremely busy road in order to get back onto the sidewalk, just to have to cross back a little later. Additional and extended sidewalks were also requested often. Poor road conditions were also a major concern for residents, though this primarily seemed to impact those with personal vehicles. In both cases, there was a sense from community members that roads and sidewalks received better care and maintenance in downtown and wealthier areas.

Biking in this community is seen as a desired option for transportation, but many are discouraged due to safety concerns. They explained that bike lanes are poorly marked, poorly maintained, and are absent more often than not. Several times, residents brought up Burlington's electric bike-share program, which generated excitement but many remarked that it wouldn't matter unless biking infrastructure was improved.

2.5.3 Public Transit

In addition to sidewalk improvements, the other most important issues for Rutland's residents seemed to be bus shelters and schedules. Like Burlington, many residents saw a need for bus schedules to be extended, especially to accommodate those who worked late and those who wished to socialize in the evenings. Many were confused and frustrated as to why most bus routes ended at 4pm when many did not finish work until 5pm. Additionally, the lack of bus routes on Sundays limited people's ability to go to work, attend religious services, or travel for social outings.

Bus shelters were frequently mentioned and requested, as participants noted that they would greatly benefit from shelters with evening illumination and protection from weather and cold while also allowing them to signal their presence to bus drivers. During one meeting, it was explained that a previous mayor of Rutland City removed many bus shelters because they had been vandalized. Residents were in agreement when one woman asserted that this was ridiculous and represented another instance of transportation infrastructure that catered to tourists rather than locals.

Bus routes were also a point of frustration for many. However, an ongoing discussion and survey facilitated by the Rutland RPC and Marble Valley Regional Transit regarding bus route changes seemed to reduce conversations around these issues in meetings facilitated by RDI. One common request was to change routes so that major employment centers and social services were easily accessible.

Safety on the bus was another concern, emphasized by those with disabilities. When drivers stopped abruptly or began driving before passengers were situated, people could be injured. One community member shared a story about falling out of their seat and damaging their shoulder. This passenger asked the bus driver to call for an ambulance, but instead, they called the driver called their own supervisor to give the passenger a ride to the hospital. This story highlighted residents' concerns about safety, accountability, and a need for drivers to be well-trained and compensated to handle situations such as these - and ensure they do not happen in the first place.

2.5.4 Access to Essentials

Access to medical facilities was the most frequently mentioned need in this community. Particularly when trying to receive specialized treatment, residents were forced to travel to Burlington or Dartmouth-Hitchcock, which proved to be very challenging. Many were confused about how to make these trips and found them to be daunting.

2.5.5 Private Transportation

Most community members we engaged with did not have personal vehicles, opting to use public transportation and other options. This choice was almost always driven by cost; those with higher income typically had vehicles. For those outside of Rutland City, cars were more essential and therefore more participants owned cars. In any case, those with cars mentioned similar issues; the costs of insurance, repairs, and other fees such as registration, on top of car payments made it difficult to own a car. Some suggested that state fees and fines should be based on income level.

When conversations about electric vehicles or EV infrastructure came up, participants had some concerns about vehicles durability and ability to withstand adverse conditions, but typically saw them as a good thing. However, they viewed these incentive programs and vehicles as out-of-reach and out of touch. Some were frustrated, seeing these programs as an inequitable distribution of resources.

2.5.6 Other Transportation Services, Programs, and Incentives

While some residents appreciated free transit through MVRT's Medicaid Transportation program, many expressed frustrations with the need to give advance notice. Additionally, many who were not eligible to receive this service, such as those in wheelchairs but with other insurance, expressed that access to a service like this would be greatly appreciated. Other than this program, few other initiatives were discussed in detail.

3.0 ENGAGEMENT INSIGHT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historical marginalization of BIPOC, low-income, and rural communities has resulted in the exclusion of these communities from decision-making processes. This legacy has disrupted cultures and practices of collective governance, democratic participation, and self-determination. It has also left a legacy of inequity in access to services and resources such as education, jobs, technology, free-time, and personal vehicles. For marginalized communities, such as BIPOC and low-income communities, the result of this is that traditional public participation requires resources, information, connections, and experiences that these don't have. Furthermore, exclusion and tokenization in decision-making processes, coupled with systemic/structural racism, classism and other forms of oppression, has frequently left marginalized communities in distrustful relationships with state and local government agencies.

As such, engaging these communities in meaningful ways will require concerted efforts, beyond traditional engagement processes to meet the needs of these marginalized communities. While some communities may share similar qualities and histories, each is unique, and the general guidance provided below should be tailored to each community as appropriate.

These insights and recommendations were informed both by direct input from community members and the experience of RDI in facilitating and coordinating direct engagement.

3.1 ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES AND EXPERIENCE ACROSS COMMUNITIES

In each community, we encountered stark differences in engagement preferences.

In Rutland, we found that low-income community members readily joined community conversations and strong networks of service organizations and community groups made it easy to spread the word. It was clear that community members had a preference for in-person gatherings but were also willing to join virtual events, especially when participants had to travel from outside the city.

In Winooski and Burlington, BIPOC young adults were less likely to engage. We typically saw a smaller turn out to events and saw less willingness to participate even once participants were in the room. Typically, virtual events gathered greater attendance, but engagement was perhaps more productive when face to face. In an effort to encourage honest and comfortable participation, several meetings were hosted by BIPOC community members in an effort to create an "affinity space", where BIPOC participants were free to express themselves without worrying about having to navigate cultural barriers or differences.

In Bennington, we found that approaching this community on a neighborhood level in person was highly effective. We learned of tensions between the two neighborhoods, Willowbrook and Orchard Village early in our engagement and responded by conducting separate engagement activities in each

neighborhood. Each neighborhood is managed by different agencies. In Willowbrook, housing is managed by the Vermont Housing Authority, and Orchard Village is managed by Shires Housing. We found that engagement was somewhat lower in Willowbrook than in Orchard Village. Perhaps this can be attributed to Orchard Village's housing manager, who reportedly had a more robust history of community engagement and supported our outreach efforts.

In the Northeast Kingdom, we found that community members were very hesitant to engage. Those that did participate were often connected to local community organizations. Both virtual and in-person events were moderately attended, though this was a more divisive matter. While it seemed that in Rutland this was a matter of preference, in the NEK many community members could not attend in-person events due to health issues or transportation. For others, virtual events presented hurdles due to internet access or technological skills. Additionally, community members were wary of community engagement efforts, citing a distrust in the efficacy of their involvement, or the government as a whole.

3.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS ABOUT TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS

Community engagement is rooted in trust; that transportation professionals care about the community and what they have to say, that their time and input will have an impact, and that community members will be respected. Building this trust is a slow process built upon respect, mutuality, and self-awareness about what it means to bean 'outsider' – often with greater authority over their community than them.

Relationship-building, with the goal of establishing a presence and familiarity in the community should begin well before seeking any community input. Transportation agencies should start by connecting with established community organizations that have connections and commitments to under-resourced communities. Transportation professionals are also encouraged to attend community events and have open-ended conversations with community members and community leaders to gain an understanding of relevant issues to community stakeholders and make connections. This work is slow and does not always lead to immediate results.

Many community members doubt the impact of their input. They do not trust that decision-makers will value their opinions and even if they are valued, that these opinions will be consequential. This sentiment severely discourages participation, especially if long term participation is desired. One participant in the NEK expressed frustration that "[state agencies] ask for comments on issues they've already made up their mind on!". Another noted that "so many people have come through and asked - even though they don't really care - 'What do you need?' We won't do it anymore. We've already told them. Basic Needs! Transportation, money, clean water. There's no action; just words and everybody knows they are empty". We heard similar sentiments in other communities as well.

For continued community engagement, transportation professionals must be able to illustrate how community input will impact decisions in a meaningful way. This will require the

development of transparent and accessible public participation processes that include opportunities for community members to stay updated throughout the lifecycle of projects, clear information about internal and external influences and boundaries of a given process or project, and continued opportunities for input and community involvement at each stage of a project or process.

3.3 ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY AS A PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR

Collaborating with local organizations, community leaders, and community liaisons builds community capacity to participate in and lead decision-making processes.

Connecting with local community-based organizations is a powerful way to build trust in a community, tap into existing networks, and gain local perspectives. Organizations that provide direct services, such as food banks and homeless shelters, have connections with under-resourced communities and typically have some understanding of the issues faced by those communities. Housing managers and providers, such as mobile home park owners and housing authorities, can also be allies in distributing information. Well-respected community leaders can also serve in a similar role.

It should also be noted that some groups exist specifically for the purpose of advocating and communicating with underserved communities. One such example in Rutland is an emerging group called the JEDI Movement was in the early stages of offering consulting services that would provide organizations with insight from local BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ community members. In Winooski and Burlington, a group of "Cultural Brokers", established as part of a program in the Department of Health, regularly share information in formal and informal ways with members of their respective communities to improve health outcomes. These groups should be sought out and utilized as appropriate.

These organizations can also bring a more holistic perspective to transportation conversations. Additionally, these organizations typically can offer guidance and suggestions for what sort of engagements and outreach efforts will be effective in a given community. Organizations should be used to design engagement plans and events, shape outreach strategies, and provide direct input to transportation professionals. community organizations should be fairly compensated for their time and effort.

Community Liaisons can also be a critical component and powerful ally in building trust and relationships for meaningful engagement. Community Liaisons should be members of the target populations compensated to support community engagement. Community liaisons should be trusted and included as partners to develop agendas, identify issues, develop outreach and engagement strategies, identify community partners, analyze data and information, and decide on next steps. Our community liaisons attracted participants through their pre-existing community networks, shared information via local social media platforms (and other digital mediums) as well as on the ground, advised on appropriate translation needs, cultural approaches and more. Community Liaisons should be encouraged to advocate for underserved communities to be heard and respected and should be given

the opportunity and permission to act as a bridge between transportation professionals and community members. Community liaisons should not be expected to speak for all members of the target population or be treated its sole representative, agencies should understand these communities are not monolithic and create room for hearing the full breadth of diversity of experiences and perspectives within the target population.

3.4 COMMUNITY MEMBERS MUST BE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR TIME AND LOCAL EXPERTISE

When community members give their input, they are offering a service to the community and the transportation professional requesting that information. This service is informed by relationships, experiences, and perspectives that are unique and critical to successful work of the state. As such, participants should be compensated for their input as well as their time. Fair compensation acknowledges the expertise and value of community members and demonstrates respect. RDI compensated participants $30 per hour for their engagement in meetings and other activities. Compensation amounts were based on a model tested statewide by the REJOICE Coalition in 2019 and 2020. Participant compensation has been identified as a best practice among various organizations who do community engagement work, and we are seeing this practice gain traction across the state and beyond.

Additionally, compensation allows and attracts greater levels of engagement from low-income community members. Barriers to participation such as childcare and transportation can also be mitigated with these funds. Seemingly, in conjunction with targeted outreach, this compensation model was effective in attracting low-income participants and those who would not have otherwise attended similar community engagement events.

Compensation rationale should be clearly communicated to participants. Additionally, the compensation itself should involve low barriers and control: immediate distribution of cash compensation is preferred by participants. Participants should not be expected to provide extensive personal information such as social security numbers. Even the collection of phone numbers and emails triggered concern for some participants. Some worried that compensation would impact or endanger their social security or other benefits that were income based.

3.5 PARTICIPATION BURNOUT

For some, frequent participation in community engagement processes can be tiresome. One community organization in the NEK explained their hesitation to support processes of community engagement; “So many organizations come to [our organization] as ‘representative voices of the marginalized’. My colleagues and I, we feel like we have to stop asking our folks to fill out surveys and participate in conversations. All we are doing is asking, asking, asking.” As another community organization in the same region explained, “People are concerned about the “flash in the pan” nature of [community engagement]. People feel like they are on a treadmill of being outreached to”. Likely, these feelings are connected to a lack

of adequate compensation and the perceived impact (or lack thereof) of their input. As one community member put it; “we are tired of being listened to; just do something”. These resentful comments were not unique to the NEK but certainly more common in this area.

3.6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE HOLISTIC AND ADDRESS IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

Immediate issues may be present in communities that limit their ability to participate and inhibit deep focus and concern beyond the immediate issue. Rather than ignoring or bypassing these issues in order to obtain certain desired outcomes or information, transportation officials should take note of these issues and facilitate connections to the relevant agencies who are best suited to address them. Interagency collaboration, referral processes, and follow up are key to addressing immediate concerns and needs uncovered through community engagement processes. Not only is this an important way to improve community engagement, but it is also a powerful method of fostering trust.

It's important that transportation professionals acknowledge that food access, transportation, and housing issues are not experienced in silos. As such, participants should be encouraged to give input that reflects the interconnectedness of these issues.

Additionally, connecting residents to direct service providers, and possibly facilitating relationships between the community and the provider, is a powerful way to foster trust and gain a further understanding of the barriers and experiences of a community. For example, after hearing about issues relating to indoor air quality and health in Bennington, RDI and CWC worked to bring in a local service organization that would assist in testing and remediation of mold. Through this, we gained first-hand insight into the challenges that are faced by marginalized communities when they try to access services and interact with certain organizations.

3.7 INFORMATION MUST BE SHARED AND RECEIVED USING A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS

Information about opportunities for involvement and other important information should be shared using a wide variety of mediums, with awareness of a target audience's demographics and preferences. In the NEK, we found that Front Porch Forum was an effective method of communication, while in Rutland we found that flyers were more impactful. Professionals should also consider emails, phone calls, text messages, phone alerts, local news outlets, various forms of social media, and direct mail.

Information should also be communicated in language that is accessible, excluding jargon and translating messages into languages spoken in each community. In Winooski and Burlington, where a diversity of languages are spoken, youth explained that they frequently served as translators for their parents, something they saw as frustrating and imperfect. Translation should be done without forcing those who need it to request it. Doing so creates an undue burden for speakers

of English as a Second Language (ESL), as they must take the time to figure out which documents are relevant to read, and the time and resources spent to overcome the additional barrier and delay of seeking translation services. Much time and frustration could be saved by including multiple relevant translations within documents meant to be read by the general public.

Similarly, Information should be received and recorded using a variety of mediums. Voicemail boxes can be set up allowing people to call in and provide their input, forms and surveys should be available online and offered in print versions as well. Additionally, text messages should be considered as valid forms of input as well. Community members offered important perspectives through these mediums, sometimes doing so when unprompted.

Community members should be given opportunity to submit comments, complaints, requests for information at all times. Intake for this input should be centralized and clearly marked on the VTrans website to allow easy access. In online portals, clear and centralized links should offer translated documents and easy channels for requesting live interpretation for events and videos. Summaries and key points of documents and events could also be provided in audio or visual formats as well.

3.8 BE OPEN TO NON-PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE AND INFORMATION

When discussing an open permit with DEC staff, a staff member told us about community members who showed up to an open meeting to provide public comment. This staff member explained that community members were frustrated and verbally expressed their anger, fear, and concern. They said to us, “All I could think was ‘none of this is going to make any difference’. It just wasn’t the right way to give a public comment’. This remark implied that community members had the responsibility to present information in a specific way that fit the expectations and requirements of the agency.

This is an example of a cultural phenomenon often labeled as ‘tone policing’ and is often used, both consciously and unconsciously, to dismiss input from marginalized communities. Understanding that transportation decisions impact people’s lives, transportation professionals should be prepared to receive emotional responses. While they may be uncomfortable to receive, they offer important input and should be valued, measured, and tracked. In fact, these types of responses provide additional information to professionals; the content or process of engagement is important and impactful to participants exhibiting strong emotions.

Transportation professionals should avoid dismissing information because it was not presented to them in the appropriate manner. Sometimes this may signal a need for more information, resources, or guidance on proper procedures. However, transportation professionals should take

it upon themselves to accept input in the language, tone, and medium offered to them rather than to pressure communities into providing input in a way that conforms with standards and expectations. Furthermore, input that appears to be 'more professional' by including scientific rationale or industry language should not be given greater value than emotionally charged responses from those directly affected by policies and programs being implemented.

3.9 OFFER EDUCATION AND INFORMATION TO PROVIDE CONTEXT

Community members are often limited in their ability to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes due to a lack of information and education around a given topic. To ensure meaningful engagement, after getting a sense of informational gaps, transportation professionals should make an effort to educate community members around the following questions:

- What is the history of an issue?
- How is the concern currently being addressed?
- What are challenges and limitations to implementing solutions?
- What are possible solutions to this issue?
- What processes and stakeholders are involved in making specific changes?

By building this framework for engagement, community members and transportation officials alike can be spared the frustration of spending time on solutions that are not feasible or that fail to address challenges at hand. Understanding the complex histories and contexts of transportation issues takes time and energy and may therefore warrant further compensation and extended timelines. Furthermore, educational information should be provided in accessible mediums and language and should be as concise as possible.

3.10 PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THOSE WANTING TO ADDRESS ISSUES

During our time in both Rutland and the NEK, we encountered individuals and members of activist groups that expressed frustration, anger, excitement, disgust, and grief. The development of activist groups and appearance of activist individuals appears as a signal that something is wrong in a community; typically, inequity and/or distrust in existing processes and decision-makers. As such, community activism and frustration should be met with support. Outside parties can be especially useful to facilitate dialogue. Because these groups can be divisive and inflammatory, it may be wise to meet with these individuals and organizations rather than allow their grievances to dominate community conversations.

Activists and advocates should also be provided with information that informs their perspectives, clear instructions for how to participate in public involvement processes and have access to and the opportunity to build relationship with those who make decisions. In some cases, direct support may

be warranted. In Burlington, an Arabic-speaking cultural broker identified multiple barriers her community faced to participate in and equitably benefit from proposed rule to change EV access and sales requirements, which was open for comment in the Agency of Natural Resources. Members of our team worked with the liaison to craft the most effective comment, which she then translated and circulated to members of the Arabic-speaking community, each of whom who added handwritten personal testimony. We supported the community's desire to comment and preferred submission format by submitting their comment both electronically and by mail. In the NEK, we provided a frustrated activist group with information on how to access and use data tools, how to direct their knowledge, research and expertise to lodge a formal complaint, offered information on new legislation that may inform and impact the issues they were concerned about, and served as a bridge between agency officials and community members by listening and conveying key feedback. This insight echoes other key learnings to accept and encourage participation in whatever way that community members are willing to participate.

3.11 LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Smaller meetings lead to deeper, more meaningful relationships and informative engagement
- In-person and virtual meetings should be scheduled and located with bus schedules and work schedules in mind. As such, availability differs by community and demographics.
- Consult with a community liaison to offer multiple opportunities for engagement.
- Childcare should be provided upon request for community members.
- In consultation with community liaisons, interpreters should be hired for community events. In addition to making open engagement processes accessible to ESL speakers, when possible, additional processes should be facilitated to allow these community members to meet and contribute to processes held in their primary languages. For example, an additional focus group could be hosted for Swahili speakers. Additionally, if available, local interpreters should be hired.
- In most communities, virtual and in-person community meetings and activities are appreciated by different individuals. Typically, both methods should be employed.
- If there are plans to take photos of participants, photo releases should be present.

3.12 VARY THE SCALE OF OUTREACH

When facilitating community engagement, the scale of target communities impacts results. Conversations hosted in mobile home parks tended to focus on issues within the park, whereas a virtual conversation that was joined by some of

these same participants, in addition to others around the NEK region, focused more broadly on regional issues.

Similarly, in Bennington, where we engaged with two neighboring low-income housing communities, we heard a lot of variation between the two neighborhoods. By hosting separate conversations in each community, we gained valuable insight on the different experiences of these neighborhoods. If RDI was to host a city-wide event where we invited both of these neighborhoods to join along with other low-income housing communities, we would have lost detail and distinction. As such, it is important to be specific when identifying target communities and attempt to gather information from different 'scales' of community.

3.13 OUTREACH METHODS

Table 2 shows the diverse methods of outreach used in this effort.

TABLE 2: OUTREACH METHODS USED

METHOD	RESULTS
Tabling and Canvassing	Varied success. A good way to increase familiarity, but not extremely useful for gathering information or recruiting participants
Phone Outreach	Minimal success. Many community members did not answer, and those that did typically did not want to talk.
Texting	This was a very successful method of engagement, especially when familiarity is already established.
Fliering	Very successful in populated areas, less so in more rural regions
Facebook	This was a fairly successful method, especially when community liaisons have strong networks
Door Knocking	Varied Success. In Bennington, this was highly successful. In Burlington, where the target population was less geographically concentrated, it was less successful.
WhatsApp	This was a fairly successful method, especially when community liaisons have strong networks
Email	Email outreach that was assisted by community organizations was a great way to leverage the networks of local community groups. This is also useful for reaching those who have already participated in engagement
Front Porch Forum	Front Porch Forum had varied success; in the NEK more community members were reached than in Rutland.

3.14 COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND EVENTS ARE ONLY ONE STRATEGY

The conceptualization of community engagement is often narrow and must be expanded. Gathering input from community members through discussion and events, no matter how robust, inclusive, and respectful, is simply one method of community engagement.

In addition to community meetings and discussions, transportation officials should elicit diverse forms of input, and consider it as valuable input. RDI had success engaging community members through the following methods:

- Photovoice Challenge: RDI, in partnership with CWC, requested residents to submit photos with written descriptions. Furthermore, participants were gathered for a ceremony where a panel of local community leaders selected the best examples to receive prize money. Not only did this allow residents to communicate information through photography, it also encouraged participation and engagement through gamification (the application of typical game-playing elements).
- Community Walks: In Bennington, community members walked around their community with RDI and CWC while answering questions about what they saw and experienced in their environment.
- Participatory Mapping: In Bennington, community walks were coupled with a reflective mapping process, where participants used sticky notes to place comments directly on a map in order to spatialize their information. In Rutland, residents were encouraged to draw and add notes onto a map to indicate hazards, desires, and other comments as they related to specific locations.

Community members from target population can be offered multiple opportunities to weigh in and offer their perspectives to inform the work being done by transportation professionals. Other opportunities for incorporating perspectives of community stakeholders in transportation decisions include:

- Inclusion of community members in boards and committees that serve advisory and executive functions for agencies and organizations that impact local transportation. As one community member said, “It would be helpful to have a citizens advisory council with some teeth, to make sure that the public is making contributions before there’s something to complain about”.
- Community members, and those with similar experiences should be trained and hired into agencies and organizations in decision-making roles.
- Participatory budgeting can turn community input into a clear process with tangible outcomes.
- Initiatives can be voted on by utilizing existing institutions such as town meeting days, or through non-traditional methods such as digital and online voting systems.

- Community groups are often already engaged in concreted efforts to improve transportation. In Rutland, we spoke with members of the group, Disabled Access & Advocacy of the Rutland Area (DAARA); volunteers that influenced local business owners and municipal officials to improve accessibility and transportation for differently abled community members. Existing local community organizations such as DAARA should be provided with compensation, technical support, and funding to accomplish their goals, even when these initiatives are unconventional and innovative.

4.0 RPC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATUS

As stated, community engagement is a process of building and maintaining trust and relationships. Furthermore, it is a process that must be rooted in the context of a place and community. With proper funding, guidance, and support, Regional Planning Commission's (RPC's) are positioned to be excellent partners in facilitating local relationships and community engagement between VTrans and communities across Vermont. However, VTrans should not rely solely on RPCs to conduct community engagement and hold community relationships.

There are several key recommendations that VTrans professionals and RPCs should follow in order to begin a process of productive and meaningful participation and to foster a partnership between transportation professionals and community members.

4.1 ALLOCATE STAFF TIME AND RESOURCES TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To transition from superficial or non-existent community engagement toward meaningful participation and relationships, RPCs and VTrans professionals must commit significant time and resources towards doing the diverse work of engagement and relationship building.

4.2 TRUTHFULLY AND THOROUGHLY ASSESS THE CURRENT STATUS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

The first thing a transportation professionals should do is to understand past and ongoing attempts at community engagement, existing relationships that they have with communities and community-based organizations, as well as the frameworks, practices, and assumptions that underpin these efforts. Possible tools to assist in this process include the Center for Whole Communities Whole Measures Framework as well as the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Community Ownership. These evaluations

allow agencies to incorporate outside perspectives, such as that of a community liaison or the use of a focus group.

4.3 ASSESS CURRENT CONTEXT, CHALLENGES, AND BARRIERS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Following this, Transportation Professionals should work to understand how and why their current community engagement practices and outcomes have come to be. To understand context, RPCs and VTrans should work to understand the behaviors and conditions of target communities, historical and contemporary experiences and relationships of the community in relation to state and federal agencies. As expected, it is recommended that agencies inform and strengthen this process by gaining external input from target communities.

4.4 PREPARE INFORMATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

As explained, meaningful community engagement requires community members to be informed and educated on relevant issues and processes. Transportation Professionals should create materials that can be readily distributed in anticipation of community engagement and throughout the process. These materials should be reviewed by community members to ensure accessibility.

4.5 ENGAGE COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS EARLY

Prior recommendations urge VTrans to begin consulting with community members even as they are developing strategies and engaging in reflection. As relationships take time to solidify, community engagement should begin as soon as possible, with the understanding that the process will require flexibility and an expectation of imperfection. Before asking community members to provide state agencies with something – whether that be input, consent, or information – Transportation Professionals can attend community events, share information with communities, and begin having non-transactional conversations and events with community leaders, organizations, and the general public.

4.6 CREATE SPACE FOR INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Transportation Professionals should understand community engagement efforts that are happening throughout Vermont's state agencies and develop plans and systems that encourage collaboration. One community member suggestion speaks to this; "It feels like there are so many different fragmented groups doing community engagement - it makes me think that there needs to be a bigger more professional group that can maybe do it all at once"

4.7 DEVELOP AND PRACTICE THE USE OF BIDIRECTIONAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Tools such as social media, Front Porch Forum, and phone communication may be straightforward, but agencies should establish systems for data collection, responsiveness, and transparency to ensure that these communications channels are used effectively rather than just appearing to do so.

4.8 HOW HAVE RPC'S BEEN INVOLVED IN RDI'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS?

RPCs involvement in RDI's community engagement work was limited mainly due to time and funding constraints. RPCs were invited but not expected or obligated to collaborate on the community engagement work. RPCs have accepted RDI's invitations to attend the community 'shareback' sessions. RDI thought carefully about where it made sense to incorporate RPCs in this process and made decision to limit RPC presence in cases where we felt that the presence of a municipal transportation professional would hinder open and honest feedback from community members. Table 3 summarizes the RPC involvement in this effort.

TABLE 3: REGION PLANNING COMMISSIONS INVOLVED IN THIS TASK

Bennington RPC	In Bennington, RPC staff are aware of the need for improved community engagement and have been following RDI's engagement efforts. Staff will attend shareback events with community members.
Chittenden County RPC	In Winooski and Burlington, RPC staff are aware of the need for improved community engagement and have been following RDI's engagement efforts. Staff will attend shareback events with community members.
Rutland RPC	In Rutland, RPC staff have joined community engagement events and began to foster relationships with community members. Already, RRPC was engaged in a community engagement process.
Northeastern Vermont Development Association	In the NEK, RPC staff are aware of the need for improved community engagement and have been following RDI's engagement efforts. Staff will attend shareback events with community members.

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

These summaries sketch a rough picture of the outreach activities and engagement events that were carried out in each community. It should be noted how different outreach activities in each community led to different levels of attendance in engagement events – however, attendance was also influenced by a variety of other factors including scheduling, engagement type and content, weather, location, and quality of trust and relationships.

ITEM 1: Bennington Summary of Activities

DATE	EVENT/ACTIVITY	DETAILS & ATTENDANCE
5/1	Partnership with ACT Bennington and Bennington County Conservation District	
5/31	Doorknocking at Willowbrook	Conducted with community liaison
6/1	Doorknocking in Orchard Village	Conducted with community liaison
6/2-6/17	Phone and text outreach	
6/18	Youth Neighborhood Walk and Participatory Mapping: Orchard Village & Willowbrook	Conducted with ACT Bennington and community liaison. 19 total participants
7/1-7/23	Doorknocking, phone and text outreach	
7/24	Adult Community Walk and Participatory Mapping: Orchard Village & Willowbrook	With Housing Authority and ACT Bennington. Separate events held in Willowbrook and Orchard Village. 27 total participants
8/2	NAACP Partnership to deliver at-home testing kits for mold and lead	
8/10	BROC Partnership: Service Provision and information sharing	
8/15-9/9	Doorknocking and text outreach	Doorknocking with community liaison, text outreach using Hustle
9/10	Community Conversation: Transportation	Facilitated with community liaison. Separate events were held in Willowbrook and Orchard Village. 12 participants joined.
9/11	Virtual Community Conversation: Transportation	Facilitated with community liaison, 11 participants joined
9/12-9/24	Doorknocking and text outreach	Doorknocking with community liaison, text outreach using Hustle
9/25	Community Meeting: VLA Housing	Separate events held in Orchard Village and Willowbrook with community liaison and Bennington Conservation District. 54 participants joined in total.
10/1-10/29	Doorknocking and text outreach	Doorknocking with community liaison, text outreach using Hustle
10/30	“Share-back” Event	Separate events held in Orchard Village and Willowbrook with community liaison.

Total Meetings: 12

Attendance to date: 123

ITEM 2: Burlington & Winooski Summary of Activities

DATE	EVENT/ACTIVITY	DETAILS & ATTENDANCE
6/18-6/19	Juneteenth Canvass	Canvassed on multiple days with community liaison
6/20-7/29	Facebook and WhatsApp Outreach	Conducted by community liaison
7/9	Rotary Park Canvass	
7/20	Photovoice Judging Panel Gathering	
7/29	Photovoice Ceremony	Hosted with community liaison. Total attendance of 7, with 3 photovoice participants.
8/4	Meeting with Cultural Brokers	
8/9	Partnership with Peace and Justice Center	
8/11-8/25	Doorknocking, Cultural Broker outreach, email outreach	
8/26	In-person Community meeting: Transportation Barriers	Facilitated with community liaison in partnership with the Peace and Justice Center. Attendance of 3.
8/29	Virtual Community meeting: Transportation Barriers	Facilitated with community liaison in partnership with the Peace and Justice Center. Attendance of 19.
9/1-9/28	Email outreach, texting and outreach via cultural brokers	
9/29	Virtual Meeting: Housing and Public Participation	Assisted Public Participation facilitated with community liaison in partnership with Vermont Law School and Vermont Legal Aid. Attendance of 8.
9/30	In-person Meeting: Housing and Public Participation	Assisted Public Participation facilitated with community liaison in partnership with Vermont Law School and Vermont Legal Aid. Attendance of 10.
10/15-10/30	Email outreach	
11/1	“Share-back” Event	Facilitated with community liaison

Total Meetings: 6

Attendance to date: 47

ITEM 3: NEK Summary of Activities

DATE	EVENT/ACTIVITY	DETAILS & NOTES
6/15-7/15	Email Connections with Community partners and existing connections	With support and introductions made by community liaisons
7/2	Shattuck Hill MHP doorknocking	
7/5-7/15	Email Outreach, phone banking	
7/5	Rural Edge Outreach	Rural Edge, a low-income housing provider shared information with their contacts
7/12	Community Conversation: Environmental Justice	Conducted with community liaison, hosted at a community center in Newport. No attendance.
8/1-8/15	Senior Center Conversations	Attended Senior centers during Senior Lunches to meet older adults and hear input
8/1-8/29	Meetings with partners: DUMP, NEKCA, NEKO	
8/12	Doorknocking at Derby Mobile Home	
8/15-9/4	Door knocking at Shattuck Hill, Rural Edge distributes postcards via direct mail	
9/4	Community Meeting at Shattuck Hill Mobile Home Park: Transportation barriers and challenges	Facilitated with community liaison. Joined by 5 participants
9/6-9/24	Front Porch Forum ads, Press release, Facebook, org outreach, Rural Edge outreach	With support from Community liaison
9/25	Virtual Transportation Forum	Open to the broader NEK region. Information offered on Green Mountain Transit's MyRide program, Rural Community Transportation, and other initiatives. Hosted with community liaisons. Attendance of 33.
9/15-10/1	Hustle, Direct Outreach to Community Orgs	
10/2	Assisted Public Participation	In partnership with Vermont Law School and Slingshot. Facilitated with community liaison. 12 participants in attendance.
10/5-10/26	Email outreach	
10/27	"Share-back" Event	

Total Meetings: 5

Attendance to date: 50

ITEM 4: Rutland Summary of Activities

DATE	EVENT/ACTIVITY	DETAILS
7/1-8/8	Email outreach and text banking to Community Organizations and known contacts.	Connected with DAARA, Social Tinkering, Project Vision, and Rutland NAACP. Text banking with RAD contacts in the area with probable low-income
7/22	Fliering, doorknocking, and Canvass at Bus Station and Community Event	
8/1	RUMC Meal Distribution Canvass	
8/9	Focus Group	7 participants, hosted in partnership with Energy Action Network
	Conversations with potential Community Partners	
8/9-8/26	Fliering, Bus stop canvassing, email outreach, text banking	
8/25	Virtual Community Meeting and participatory mapping	Hosted with community liaison. 15 participants
8/27	Community Meeting	Hosted with community liaison. 28 participants.
9/1-9/30	Fliering, text banking, bus stop canvassing, Front Porch Forum, email and organizational outreach	
`10/1	Facilitated Dialogue	Attended by RPC staff, Rutland City Aldermen and Mayor, and representative Notte. Supported by community liaison, with 54 participants
10/10-10/25	Email Outreach	
10/26	“Share-back” Event	

Total Meetings: 5

Attendance to date: 104

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Community Engagement

Michael Weiss
Rights & Democracy Institute

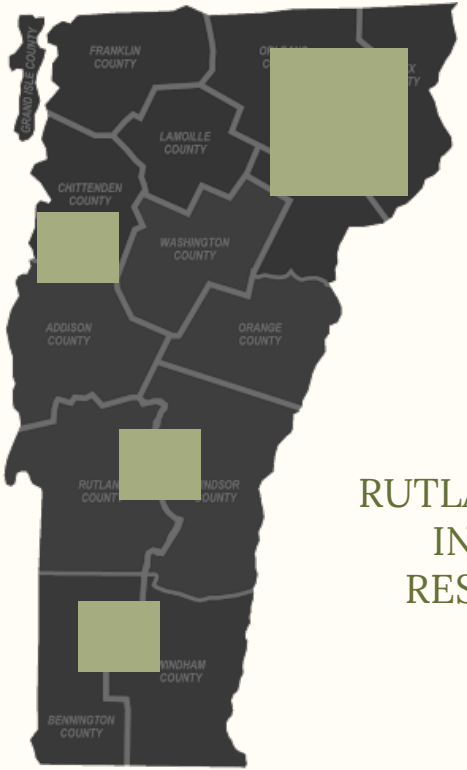
Prepared for the VT Agency of Transportation

Agenda

- Introduction
- Key Lessons
- Tools & Tips
- Narrative Examples
- Facilitated Discussion
- Wrap Up

Rights & Democracy

FOCUS POPULATIONS



BURLINGTON & WINOOSKI BIPOC YOUTH

NEK ELDERS & MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS

RUTLAND LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

BENNINGTON LOW-INCOME HOUSING RESIDENTS

KEY LESSONS & APPROACHES

Engagement is about trust & relationships

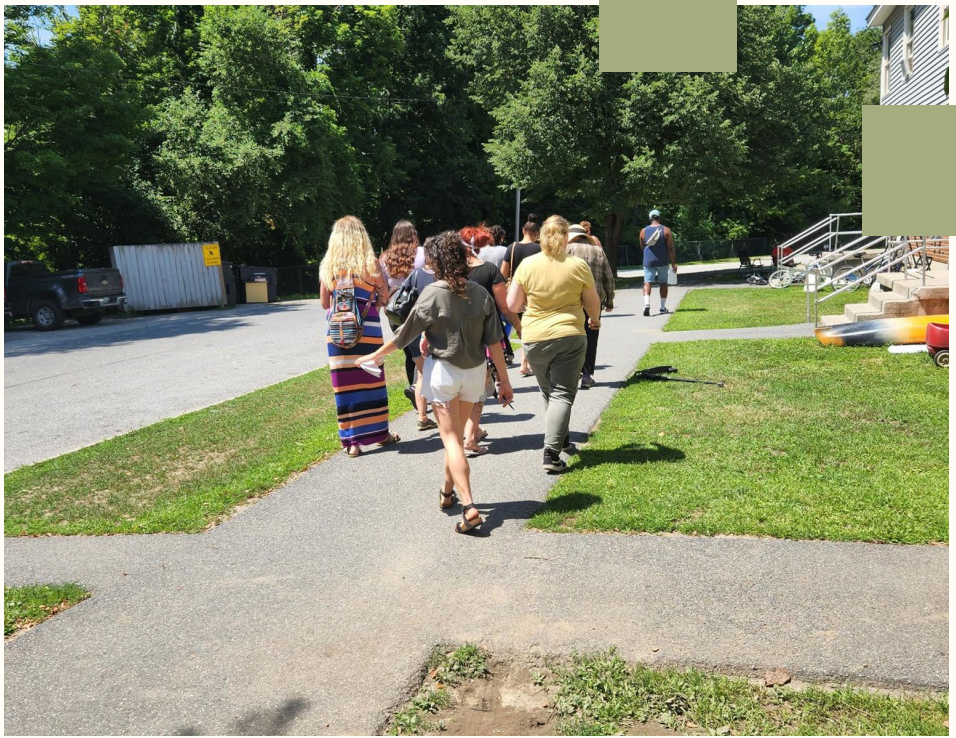
- Begin building relationships before engagement
- Start by connecting with community organizations and leaders
- Show how community input leads to action; process, boundaries, and influences.

Find Guidance and Connections through Community Liaisons

- Work with local community members as consultants
- Ensure a reciprocal relationship - how can this work build community capacity to engage?
- Trust the guidance of liaisons

Compensate Participants as Appropriate

- Compensation relieves participation barriers such as transportation.
- Ensure compensation has low barriers
- Compensation can represent value for local expertise



Engage Holistically & Address Immediate Concerns

- Communities often have pressing needs and issues that prevent meaningful engagement
- Facilitate connections to agencies that can address any immediate community needs
- Understand that issues do not exist in “silos”

Employ Diverse methods of Information Sharing

- To spread the word and share information, use emails, phone calls, text messages, phone alerts, news outlets, social media, and direct mail – as guided by liaisons

- Use clear and simple language, translate when needed – as guided by liaisons

- Clear and centralized links should offer translated documents and channels for requesting interpretation and summaries of key documents and events

Employ Diverse methods of Information Collection

- Record, track, and value input from various mediums; voicemails, conversations, community meetings, texts, online and physical surveys.

- Remain open to input, comments, complaints, and requests at all times.

Be open to non-professional language and information

- Avoid “Tone Policing” to dismiss community input
- Understand that emotions embedded in input = key information
- Create a culture and systems for receiving ‘non-professional’ language and input
- Avoid valuing ‘professional’ input over other input

Offer education and information to provide context

- Address the following questions:
  - What is the history of an issue?
  - How is this issue being addressed?
  - What are limitation to solutions?
  - What are possible solutions?
  - What processes are stakeholders are involved in making change?

- Understand that education takes time for professionals and for community members

- Ensure information is accessible and concise

Provide support to those wanting to address issues

- Activist and advocacy groups signal issues in a community or in existing processes
- Meet with these groups independently to avoid derailment of community-wide events and ensure their perspectives are given adequate consideration
- Provide groups with key information, instruction on how to participate effectively, and opportunity to build relationships with decision makers

Logistical Considerations

- Keep meetings small
- Schedule meetings around bus and work schedules
- Offer childcare options on request
- Hire interpreters as needed and offer language specific engagements
- Offer virtual and in-person opportunities
- Vary the scale of outreach

Community meetings and events are only one strategy

- Gather community input in various ways:
- Photovoice Challenge
- Community walks
- Participatory Mapping

Community meetings and events are only one strategy

- Include community members in boards and committees
- Hire community members and those with ‘lived experience’
- Participatory budgeting
- Voting; town meetings, online voting, by mail
- Support existing community organizations

Communication

Mobilize

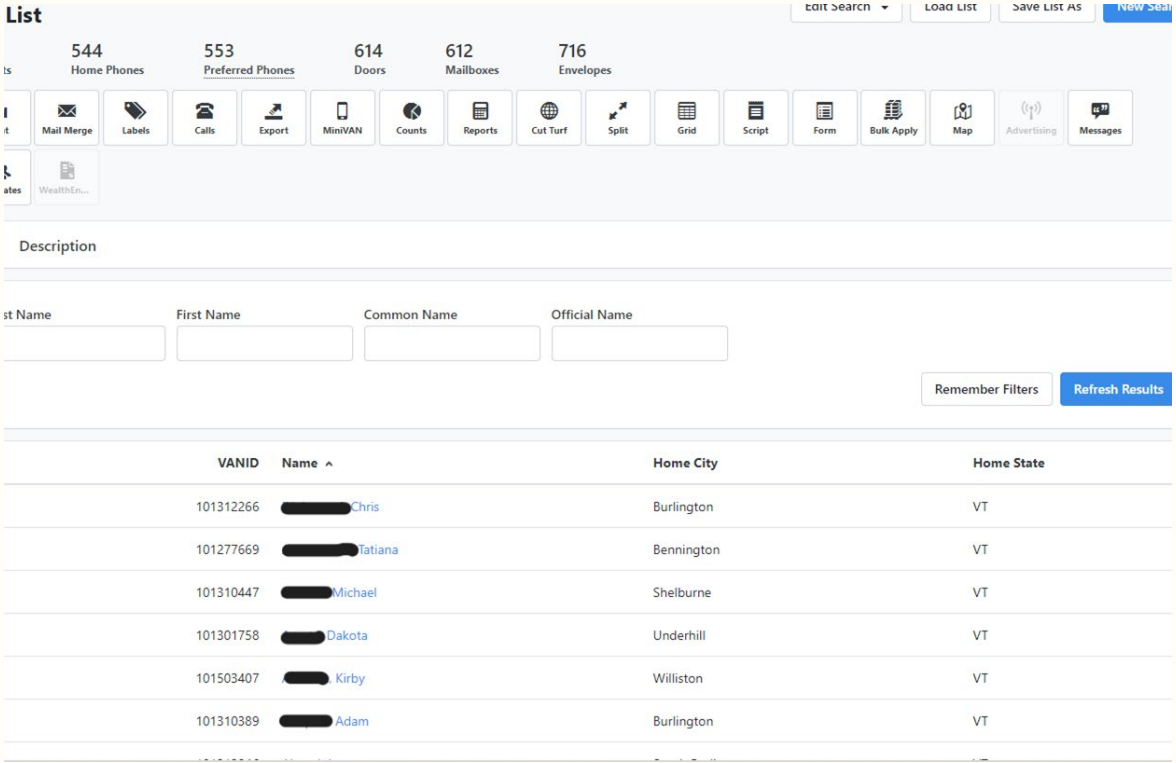
Event management platform

Dialpad

"Proxy" phone with transcription

Hustle

"Text-banking" software



Relationship Management Software

Record, Track, Follow-up on, and analyze interactions and community engagement

EveryAction

Older Vermonters

Door knocking and mail communication are especially effective

Connect with senior meal coordinators, housing managers, neighborhood orgs, VCIL, VT AAA

Embrace impromptu and on-site engagement

New Americans & BIPOC

Community Liaisons are essential - word of mouth + overcoming cultural and language barriers

Embrace social media & online spaces

Consider affinity spaces

Low- income Communities

Compensation is critical

Flyering, Tabling, and “canvassing” at social service centers & transportation hubs

Ensure communication with social service organizations to avoid “burnout”

Further Guidance

Be flexible and allow for experimentation

Expect failures

Dedicate considerable time and resources

Rutland Transportation Issues

Burlington & Winooski Bridge Discussion

Bennington Community Walks

Northeast Kingdom Transportation Webinar

Thank You

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Task 3 Appendix – Regional Planning

December 2022

Transportation Equity Framework 2023

VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

VAPDA Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies

RSG the science of insight

Report Title:

Task 3 – Regional Planning Commissions

Report Prepared by:

RSG

Report Prepared for:

Vermont Agency of Transportation

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VERMONT
AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

CONTENTS

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS 1

1.1 OVERVIEW.....1

1.2 TWO RIVERS OTTOQUEECHEE (TRORC), JULY 14, 2022.....2

1.3 BENNINGTON, JULY 20, 2022 3

1.4 LAMOILLE RPC, JULY 27, 2022 4

1.5 RUTLAND RPC, JULY 28, 2022.....6

1.6 CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, AUGUST 2, 2022: 7

1.7 MOUNT ASCUTNEY RPC, AUGUST 24, 2022:.....9

1.8 NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, SEPTEMBER 8, 2022 – TAC MEETING: 10

1.9 WINDHAM COUNTY RPC, SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 – TAC MEETING: 12

1.10 NVDA RPC, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 – TAC MEETING:.....13

1.11 CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022 – TAC MEETING:.....14

1.12 ADDISON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, OCTOBER 19, 2022 – TAC MEETING 14

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS

1.1 OVERVIEW

RSG and VTrans participated in 11 meetings between July 14, 2022 – October 19, 2022, with Regional Planning Commissions. Develop memo reporting key takeaways and summarizing individual meeting notes.

A consistent powerpoint deck was created to provide a background overview and context of the project, introduce draft definitions of equity and how transportation equity is considered, and concepts of equity within the six framework pillars. The presentation included time for input and feedback on the pillars as well as key questions to inform the development of the framework itself.

Key Takeaways:

- The regions, and their representatives supporting the commissions are all at different places in terms of working with equity and the understanding of what is equity, why is it important, and how outcomes have been influenced by inequities.
- Providing safe and efficient means to travel by non-auto means is more than a luxury and should not be viewed as an 'alternative mode.' It is a means by which those without access to a private or shared vehicle can safely meet daily needs. Funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, especially around vulnerable communities has been identified as an area to increase emphasis and attention around the state.
- Transparency in the funding of our transportation system and the perceived lack of voice and standing was a concern that many regions and communities expressed. A concern that urban areas were receiving a 'disproportionate' share of investment. There is widespread interest in trying to report on some pro rata share of spending, example being a per capita transportation spending, modal spending by regional, etc. The VPSP2 process was of interest and applauded for introducing consistency, but also flagged as not having enough local voice in the process and lack of clarity about how active mode safety issues are considered as well as the obvious gap in having an explicit element to consider equity outcomes.
- Interest in trying to visualize what equity means in an especially rural location within a rural state. There is interest in hearing from others, using case studies and examples of innovations and sharing information widely around the state.
- Let us find ways to use local information to supplement official data (e.g., Census) that could be valuable for planning efforts. This may include Town Clerks, local school lunch data, school transportation data, etc.

- Several communities and regions have built relationships with community-based organizations. A handful of instances offering stipends and compensation for involvement. Few RPCs or towns have been able to bring expanded membership and additional voices (particularly from historically marginalized and underserved/underrepresented communities) to the decision-making process.

1.2 TWO RIVERS OTTOQUEECHEE (TRORC), JULY 14, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
    - TPI Workplan is the source of information and guidance for the RPC. In fairness, this (equity) isn't even on the radar.
    - Title VI plan update, US census data by towns, looking for differences over time. The committee referenced town inclusion communities, Down DEI committees that has considered different levels of involvement.
    - A member from Hartland was specifically concerned with the follow through, both in terms of costs and the ability to answer the questions as to what they hear. What is the level of expectation, is it real, and how can we set realistic expectations. Need to be concerned with being able to deliver based on what we hear…
    - A member from Bradford. Comment on the VSP2 process where safety is considered. However, it is focused on vehicular safety vs non-auto safety. The perspective in the evaluation is all about vehicular.
- *Question 2:*
    - TAC & Towns are the voice to prioritize.
    - Good example of engagement in Hartland is on the bridges where they are to evaluate and investigate the detour routes. However, the engagement activities are focused on this limited piece of the overall contribution.
    - Example from the RPC is the MAB project manager from Royalton-Chelsea Street engagement. A public meeting, flyers, email, etc. Typical activities.
    - More innovative includes the work done for the E&D community – focused on engaging public transit rider (Not sure on the mechanism but appeared to reach people who often were not active in the feedback or decision processes).
- *Question 3:*

- It was observed that the VTrans asset management team's questions regarding users of the system, is it designed sufficiently for those users, is a good one. However, construction is clearly too late to maximize the use/benefit of that information.

- *Question 4:*
    - Example – Oxbow district. Bike/ped scoping study, path to elementary school to the town forest, bypass a I-91 underpass. A project specifically oriented to assist students is an equity project. However, not viewed as such previously. The need for the project must be accounted for given the cost and specific audience.
    - Are there performance measures for equity in the TPI guidance? Is there a goal or is this just a checkbox for the state.

1.3 BENNINGTON, JULY 20, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
    - The region has inequities for years around village centers, downtown Bennington, as well as the rural communities, and those with lower incomes. The RPC has put more of a qualitative lens on the approach that is summarized in the LRTPs. They have used e911 point data.
    - US census has a lag in the data. Limited to Tract level. What about school boards which use other data items, such as food stamps, etc.
    - Staff members stressed their use of qualitative work in the comments and that they know from their day-to-day work where the issues are.
    - Use the town select boards and planning boards for information on who and what is going on at the community level.
- *Question 2:*
    - We can always do better.
    - There has been more reliance on the 'standard' planning process.
    - Internet and remote access have been huge for public participation, improved hearing from parents, etc.
    - Partnerships are key. There was a grant that was focused on substance abuse issues, that turned into a transit planning study. Also related is refugee resettlement and their need for transit access.

- It would be great to get guidance in the TPI process.

- *Question 3:*
    - Most projects are equity focused investments. The municipality and committee know the issues. We need safe and efficient access for the people. There are larger issues with street design standards… for example, large snowplows govern the design of the roadway system. People as users are considered last.
    - The needs have been clear for years.
    - The needs have been prioritized with equity in mind since that is where the needs are.
    - The funding has been provided.
    - Geographic and bias toward the more urban areas of the state. Bennington region hasn't received the same sort of respect or funding that other parts of the state have seen.
    - Bias from VTrans and the limitations to have modal bias and challenges of putting bicycle infrastructure on 'road' projects.

1.4 LAMOILLE RPC, JULY 27, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
    - Accurate population: Justice, equity, diversity, inclusion just started. The staff is starting to look at who maybe missed. Poverty, homeless, families – land rich + money poor.

- *Question 2:*
    - Less driving options, older people, mobile homes, people with addictions are those who would likely have something to say but are often not part of the conversation.
    - Human services agencies formed a coalition. 20 -30 diff. groups. They were dedicated to max efficiency to emergency response to covid. Lamoille county racial equity group. They are part of that coalition.
    - LCRPC help – grants – paid staff through United Way, Capstone, Meals on Wheels, etc.
    - Gaps in transit. They are doing a research project on who is being served or there are opportunities for greater transit access / needs.

- Mennonite community – a specific group who wishes not to be engaged. The question is how and what is the best on how to be respectful. Do we engage or not? Letters, etc. How do we reach out a leader in different communities through leaders or liaisons?
- Example: Radio stations for local ads (in Wolcott), hard copy mail, Front Porch Forums, newspapers,
- School systems and their robocalls have good ways to get the word out about different things.

- *Question 3:*
  - Needs:
    - Visitor vs. non visitor stresses? And issues?
    - Rural dispersed
    - Housing costs vs work force housing? Job locations and pay for jobs.
    - Concerns that wealthier towns get the priority. It continues to perpetuate the existing inequities.
  - Prioritization:
    - Is volume of roads the best measure of demand and use? Rather connectivity and regional importance?
    - High speed internet, cell phones, the are ways to access and meet our daily needs.
    - Transit needs: there are wide needs and struggle to connect between the employment hubs. Limited to Morristown and Stowe, leaving out other locations.
    - Sidewalks are more than just nice to haves. They are providing real mobility options for some users.
- *Question 4:*
  - Goal for the plan:
    - Organize a workshop to guide municipalities on these topics. Training and awareness. Educate and engage selectboards, town volunteers, etc.
    - Education on the data that is available.
    - What have we found for examples, case studies, etc. help applying for grants, and addressing inequities?

- Town Clerks – are the important resource of learning and understanding what is happening around town.

1.5 RUTLAND RPC, JULY 28, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
  - Center for independent living has been a partner to the region and the city.
  - Project Vision for City of Rutland. It is run by the police department. Unique to the area and has received national recognition. They do 'neighborhood walks.' Invites go out a couple times a month. anecdotal feedback and input from participants. Found less formal is more receptive.
  - Communities can learn who may be struggling or not meeting needs – awareness from utility bills and tax collection issues.
  - Example on how an upcoming study in Mendon route Rte. 4 needs to be designed to engage with a wide audience. The focus is on safety of the facility.
  - Downtown Brandon. Equity should be about accessibility for everyone. Walkable downtown. Make it safe, attractive, etc.
- *Question 2:*
  - On-going work on transit routes has taken new approaches to learn and hear from communities on how they use transit and where there are gaps and opportunities for improvement.
  - Needs for elevating the needs for the Route 7 – Bradford and Pittsford sections. There is a feeling that the corridor hasn't been prioritized as highly as it should given the issues there.
  - Rep from Benson - VT 22A similar story. A highway that has safety and operational challenges, but not seeing the level of investment or interest from VTrans. Numerous challenges of tractor trailers turning over or safety issues being experienced.
  - RPC & TAC communicating frustration of feeling of inequities with the Rutland and rural areas around it with limited money and time being spent in the region.

- Idea: Rutland RPC can we find new and improved ways to support smaller, more rural communities with direct assistance, help with capacity building, support the community with funding and technical assistance. There needs to be more support for the communities to do the work.
- Example of challenge: Sidewalk in Benson. A project need long in the making to connect the school to the town. But still hasn't been done.
- Common regarding the 65% of mileage is town and municipality roads, but funding is spent more on state and fed roads. This cost share has been an issue that remains and would like to see greater equity or communicating how these decisions are being made.

- Goals for the document/framework:
  - Making a document accessible. Readable and useful
  - Greater clarity on the decision-making process. Where does the local voice matter? Who is making the final decisions? How much funding to each region? How much local collaboration.
  - Support training and workshops for the topics being discussed and covered in the VTEF.

1.6 CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, AUGUST 2, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
  - Examples of work in the Shelburne community. The Community Heart and Soul. Live, work, play – heart & soul. Non-traditional group that engages and focuses on various community aspects.
  - CCRPC – examples Census data, ECOS report that they are summarizing findings, RPC is trying to make space for the conversations with an equity working group and a new staff member focused on equity work.
  - City of Burlington. Focused engagements with students. The high school students very diverse and creating different insights than what would have been if only using 'traditional' engagement activities.
  - Physical and other ability needs to be front and center. There are independent councils that can advocate and advise on transportation aspects of accessibility. Including the E&D council.
- *Question 2:*

- Comments reinforced the benefits of having a more diverse group at the table. The GBIC was appreciated about the communication and understanding that can be communicated when meeting with people one on one. For example, reinforcing that for some members in the community train is essential mobility with flying being too pricey.
- Comments made: When meetings are scheduled. Where? How they are being held (in person, virtual, etc.).
- Lack of clarity on the process. Diverse input has been the focus from the CRPC recently, but they have seen that is lack of resources about educating everyone on the process and realities of project development cycles. When and how input is used? What is the trajectory of any project?
- Need mechanisms to connect people/ communities/towns to resources. Such as CATMA who can engage with individuals or with employers when transportation challenges are being experienced.

- Examples from the CCRPC:
  - Active travel plan. New and wider engagement activities. The walk & bike plan in Winooski.
  - Old Spokes Home Equity Audit.
- *Question 3:*
  - The VSP2 process is valuable and useful. Trying to sort out the key inputs from the Region and how the RPC can influence/achieve the regional goals.
  - Story re: local priorities. The Charlotte east-west trail and how a historically black owned farm expressed concern with the path routed along property. They had expressed oppression and challenges and would like to protect themselves. The decision makers appeared not to appreciate or validate the comments being received.
- *Question 4:*
  - Can the study point to any benefits and successful of equitable investments? Examples of the sources of this information?
  - Laura – look at the North Street project in Burlington? Can we point to wealth creation? Income, home ownership, what types of performance measures should be monitored?
  - Check with the office of disability – they may have some thoughts.
  - Glossary with terms. What is underserved, overburdened, etc.

1.7 MOUNT ASCUTNEY RPC, AUGUST 24, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
    - Census data. E&D mail out surveys. Good participation and insights from diverse group.
    - 2020 census data is a concern. Imperfect and may have limitations. Can the state and others help RPCs better understand what types of challenges may exist in using data. Small sample sizes, noise, etc.
    - Aging is a difficult community. However, important from equitable transportation needs. Town of Reading is making this an emphasis area.
- *Question 2:*
    - Windsor Vermont – JEDI group (Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) started by a selectboard chair member (Amanda smith? And now continues under the leadership of someone named Evan). It has been a powerful voice and effort to engage a community of new arrivals to town, or those not typically involved in town activities.
    - Springfield Working Communities Group. They were being used to survey ridership and transit improvements. Key to go where people are… farmers markets, etc. However, early findings indicated that communities needed computer and basic internet literacy skills before they could use laptops to access resources (Had to go in and listen and it changed initial approach to the problems).
- *Question 3:*
    - Springfield multiuse path and bicycle path are essentially equity focused projects that haven't seen the support. A missing gap between the town and the State building. Many people accessing the resources needing to walk in the road, etc.
    - Example of innovations and partnerships. Springfield and Bellows Falls – efforts to fix up bikes and distribute them to people in need.
    - Towns have significant needs. A lot of needs in the queue but no funding to move them forward.
    - Comment from the RPC staff. The priorities need to take into account the need vs the outcome and solution. For instance, the investments needs to be reviewed in a wider view and more holistic aspect. Broadening and just doing the same old approach. This would tell us when we are going to pave this project – what other needs exist? Would it be better to not pave and spend that money to meet a few other needs that have been in the queue?

- Arne – indicated that from towns and locals, equity has always been considered. The towns have had the need to support their members and community.

- *Question 4:*
  - The VTEF needs to be linked to other efforts in the state to achieve long-term equitable outcomes. For instance, helping the GHG/Climate change goals are also related to equity. Partnerships need to be forged to realize and achieve the larger goals.
  - VTEF needs to be sure that rural communities are given a voice.
  - VTEF – interested in hearing on the examples of engagement, bring new voices to the table to build a more continual conversation.

1.8 NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, SEPTEMBER 8, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1 & 2:*
  - Rep from the town of Georgia mentioned that two new types of projects being considered may be valuable to start asking and engaging different communities than in the past. Larger subsidized housing and housing for aging members of the community.
  - Richford rep – 49% of community is renters. Many cases of these are in section 8 or subsidized housing. With limited access to jobs. The story was told that the there was a community – then the jobs left. Then those who are left behind have limited mobility and access to meet their daily needs. There is one bus in the morning to St. Albans and one bus back in the afternoon. “Richford is at the end of the line for financial assistance from the state.“
  - Comment made about rural jobs are disappearing, but the housing remains. In the Grand Isle area, they have lived like this for years and always the ‘poor sister of the state’. Cider – is the response that the rural community looks after their own. https://cidervt.org/
  - The RPC is about to update their long-range plan. This work is well timed for this effort. Upcoming shortly is an effort to design the public engagement aspects of the plan.

- The RPC has engaged with Abundant Sun to do DEI consulting with the board and staff at the RPC. https://www.abundantsun.com/
- There are existing inequities with the fact that transit requires the 20% local match. This limits access to some of the communities which need it the most.
- Grant driven solutions, such as the bike and pedestrian grants, etc. are difficult based on the financial match (RSG noted – also the state capacity to do the work)
- A member made the observation about how we need to treat people like equals. We can't get more diverse inputs as they feel attacked/marginalized/different and 'can't take the judgement'. This is wrong and we need to create a place that is welcoming and can appreciate these differences.

- *Question 3:*
  - A member noted Notch Healthcare as an example throughout Franklin County. A federal healthcare center which offers free bikes, free kayaks, and access to affordable healthcare on a sliding scale. They transport people, using vans to appts. Etc.
  - It was mentioned some of the more difficult aspects is the collection and the availability of data.
- *Question 4:*
  - It was noted that the VSP2 process only gives modest input to the RPCs. Perhaps only 3 of the 10 or so… This may limit the actual voice of the RPC in project and investment prioritization
  - There were comments around the spatial history and make up of funding. Where has funding gone? How much more does Chittenden County get vs the rest of the state? What is the funding picture?
  - Discussion about employment and access to opportunities. – A farm in a rural community has such a significant impact the entire region. If the farm goes under, there are lots of people affected. Compare this with Chittenden County – where it could become a recreation facility – due to fewer jobs and regional economy connected to that one employment.
  - A rep mentioned, "as a 12th generation farmer" – that if family farms close down – those people then have to find other work. Often requiring driving, or worse, moving. Job training, job access, etc. all have implications on the rural

economy and the changing of the rural economy. Equity challenges are exacerbated by the changing of the rural economy.

1.9 WINDHAM COUNTY RPC, SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1 & 2:*
    - Most rural communities. Challenged by the lack or unclear opportunities around.
    - Using partnerships at the Roots Justice Center, VT workers center.
    - Concerns about investment is always 'about the city'.
    - The upcoming LRTP. Active engagement with the Abenaki in the region, the NACCP, and social justice groups (VT partnership for fairness & diversity).
- Brattleboro:
    - Is getting good success from surveys (non-statistical surveys?)
    - Paid stipends for some marginalized communities.
    - Recognition of experiences as well as real expenses.
    - Housing Project – using an NAACP focus group.
    - Tri-Park mobile home park. Using communication methods such as email newsletter for specific audiences.
    - The RPC is looking to expand the membership of committees.
    - Currently, 5 members for 4 towns only are represented.
    - The RPC is eager to apply the Just Transition principles.
- *Question 3 & 4:*
    - Rather limited in the VSP2 context. Room for more there.
    - Walk & bike plan: looking at vehicle ownership for informing priorities (where there is low ownership).

- RPC is tied, a bit based on the projects arising from communities. Limited flexibility to improve ranking using the VSP2 system.
- Perception that larger communities score better. Smallest and poorest communities can't compete.

1.10 NVDA RPC, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
  - What would direct assistance (technical or money) look like for our communities?
  - COVID unlocked opportunities for more information and sharing. Health communities could be a source of community data and awareness about inequities.
- *Question 2:*
  - Engagement activities are particularly strained in rural, dispersed locations.
  - Need to develop trust. Door to door and low tech – makes it expensive, but valuable.
  - Challenge of engagement includes areas with high second homeowners. What role and voice to they have?
- *Question 3:*
  - VSP2 hard to get the municipal projects into the overall priorities.
  - Interest in greater transparency about where transportation funding goes.
  - Improve knowledge sharing and ways that some regions to learn from others
  - Town clerks are a clear community liaison. They know the community. They know who may be hurting financially or other ways.
  - Healthcare industry data. Who has no coverage, poor health outcomes, etc.
  - A key challenge is what is a solution to rural issues. How might the VSP2 priorities may weight rural challenges more than urban challenges? This is what needs to be considered in equity vs equality – fairness and special considerations of the challenges that rural communities face. What does a transportation framework look like Irasburg, or even Victory?

- Broadband – is a transportation issue. Access to many opportunities – jobs, healthcare, etc.

1.11 CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1 & 2:*
  - Work with community-based orgs such as Center for Independent Living, includes disabled individuals, addition, etc. Focuses on elevated voices which may have been under engaged.
  - Highlighted the work that Capstone Community Action has done on bringing rural mobility solutions out to a wider audience.
  - Challenges with limited cell phone, no internet. Especially acute for lower income residents.
  - Access is hard to get these rural, dispersed involvement. Mailers are used but come at a cost. The Broadband funding wouldn't have been the communities' priorities, until they asked a widespread community vote (via the mailers).
- *Question 3 & 4:*
  - The RPC would like to see or explore the scoring of neighborhood characteristics. How and what data underpin specific neighborhoods and their use in the prioritization and project selection process.
  - Can VSP2 work and other assessments for project selection be more transparent. Can the data for equity needs to be more informing.

1.12 ADDISON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, OCTOBER 19, 2022 – TAC MEETING

- *Question 1:*
  - State needs to focus on keeping those younger members, namely 16-24 aged Vermonters in state. This includes an emphasis on the population which is not college bound and need the support to remain here in Vermont. What are we doing for this population?

    - Comment that simply keeping infrastructure in good repair benefits all. (Good paving = good shoulders = better conditions for bicycling)
- *Question 2:*
    - The migrant worker discussion was notable. Around 400-600 at least in county.
    - More willing to take advantage of public services than in years past. There is a community of support.
    - They need to know about the available services.
    - Outreach and listening to them would be a good start to getting input and their perspective.
    - Multimodal – biking all times of the day. Dark, no shoulders, etc.
    - Leveraging school-bus transportation resources.
    - Emphasis on leveraging for students & families outside of main economic/urban centers as well.
    - Idea of school boards being at the table for insight into underrepresented populations and ideas about transportation options and solutions.
- PEL-outreach acknowledgement was affirming.
    - Example being the Vergennes economic corridor. The level of outreach and engagement was widespread and thorough.
    - Another example being the Middlebury bridge. An individual paid by the project team did an amazing job at alerting the community of the status of the project. What and who would be affected by the work. Included radio spots and other media.
    - The observation of the municipal assistance program / project development process opportunities of local concerns meetings and alternative analysis as points to reach a more diverse set of stakeholders was particularly astute.
    - The process needs to be better defined so that local projects start asking wider questions and seek to involve more people. Where and how is the guidance for MAB projects changing to reflect the focus on equity?
- *Question 3 & 4:*

- Goal to create more forward-looking plans that can unlock long-term economic and social benefits. Not limited thinking to a safety or operational challenge. Seek long-term goals.
- Addison county ferry – consider a public asset that needs statewide support. It fuels local economic activity and provides access to key shopping and other needs. This is an underappreciated and undervalued travel mode.

Transportation Equity Framework 2023

VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

VAPDA Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies

RSG the science of insight

RPC Meetings

Task 3 RPC Engagement

Context

Genesis of the Project

The Transportation Equity Framework addresses the requests posed by the Vermont General Assembly in Section 41 of Act 55 (2021) (*An act relating to the Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation*)

The Agency of Transportation, in consultation with the State's 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), shall undertake a comprehensive analysis of the State's existing transportation programs and develop a recommendation on a transportation equity framework through which the annual Transportation Program (the Agency Capital Program), and the Agency's Annual Project Prioritization Process, can be evaluated so as to advance mobility equity, which is a transportation system that increases access to mobility options, reduces air pollution, and enhances economic opportunity for Vermonters in communities that have been underserved by the State's transportation system.

In conducting the analysis required under subsection (a) of this section, the Agency, in coordination with the State's 11 RPCs, shall seek input from individuals who are underserved by the State's current transportation system or who may not have previously been consulted as part of the Agency's planning processes.

In order to aid the Agency in conducting the analysis required under subsection (a) of this section, the State's 11 RPCs shall convene regional meetings focused on achieving equity and inclusion in the transportation planning process. Meeting facilitation shall include identification of and outreach to underrepresented local communities and solicitation of input on the transportation planning process pursuant to the transportation planning efforts required under 19 V.S.A. § 10l.

We know that age, income, ability, language, race and ethnicity are predictors of health, safety and social well-being as well as resiliency in the face of climate change and economic shocks.

Social equity recognizes that we all deserve to have fair and just access to resources and opportunities to meet our needs even though we started life in different circumstances.

Transportation Equity

Transportation provides access for an individual's daily needs and quality of life. Transportation provision has been unequal in its distribution, application, benefits, and burdens. This has resulted in existing inequities that we experience today.

- Transportation equity must reduce inequities across our transportation systems and the communities they affect.
- Transportation equity enables communities and individuals' access to safe, affordable, inclusive, and multimodal means to satisfy basic needs and lead a meaningful life.
- Transportation equity will achieve resilient and sustainable access to opportunities while also reducing transportation-related disparities, adverse community impacts, systemic health inequities.
- Transportation equity is realized when these outcomes are achieved and communities are not overburdened.

RPC specific involvement

Working Group – Charlie Baker (CCRPC) and Mike Winslow (ACRPC)

Key areas for involvement from RPCs:

- Task 3 – Stakeholder and Public Involvement – Consultant team to attend TAC meetings
- Task 6 – Recommendations and Implementation Plan
- Task 7 – Draft and Final Transportation Equity Framework Report

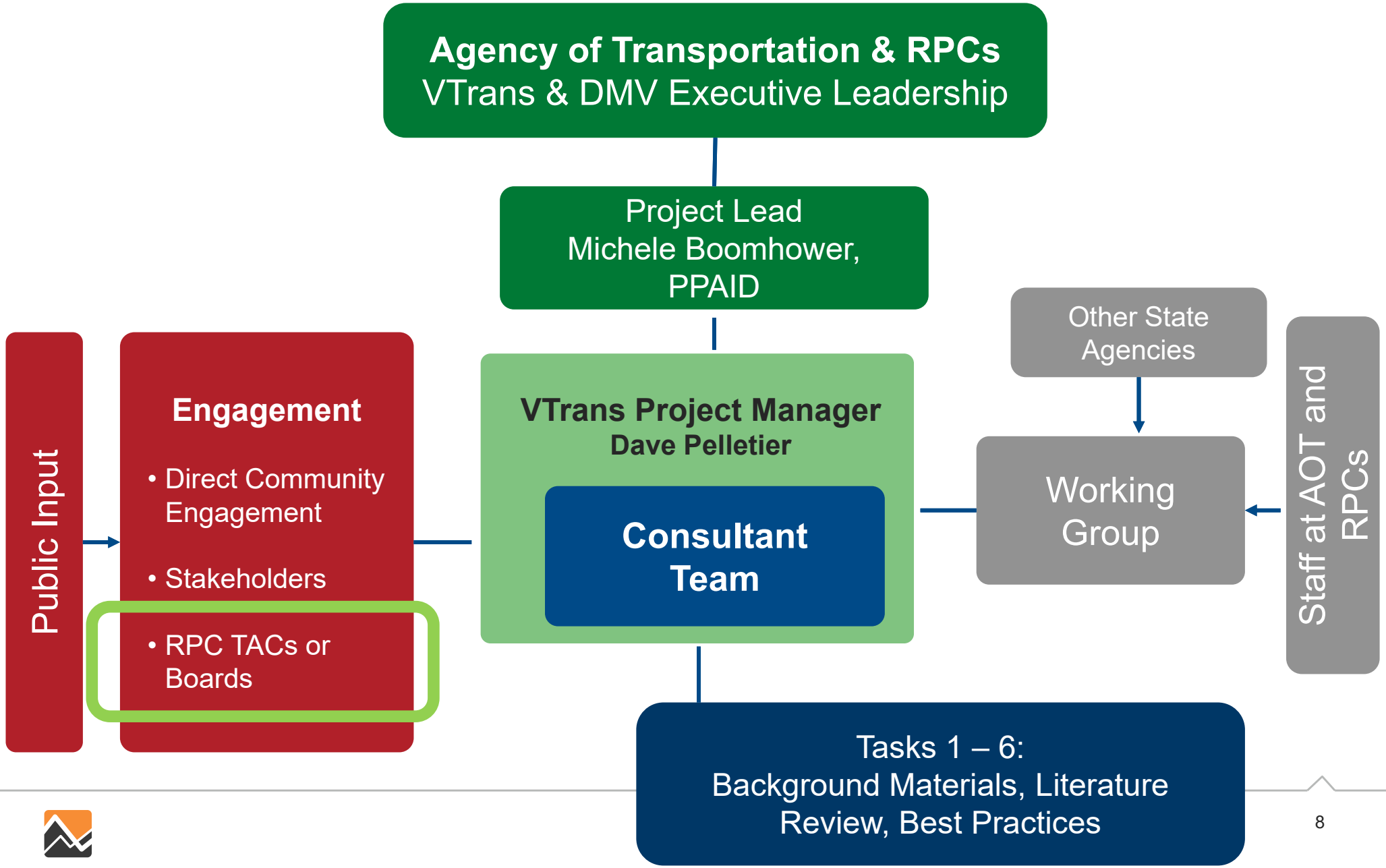
What is a Transportation Equity Framework?

A Transportation Equity Framework is a tool to help decision makers plan for and prioritize projects, ensure accurate representation in decision making, and enhance the equitable delivery of services. The framework will help us answer questions like:

- Who may not be meeting their needs due to current inequities in the transportation system?
- What projects or programs are needed to make our transportation system more equitable?
- Which projects or programs should be funded and in what order?
- How are all Vermonters involved in the decision-making process and how are their voices and concerns heard?
- How can services and the delivery of the Agency's work be carried out in a respectful, equitable, and fair manner that respects our differences and elevates those already underserved and overburdened?

https://vtrans.vermont.gov/equity

Project Organizational Structure



Recent Federal Actions

Per the Executive Office of the President's Executive Order 13985 from January 2021, the United States Government defines equity as follows:

> "The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as and not limited to: Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality."

Recent Federal Actions

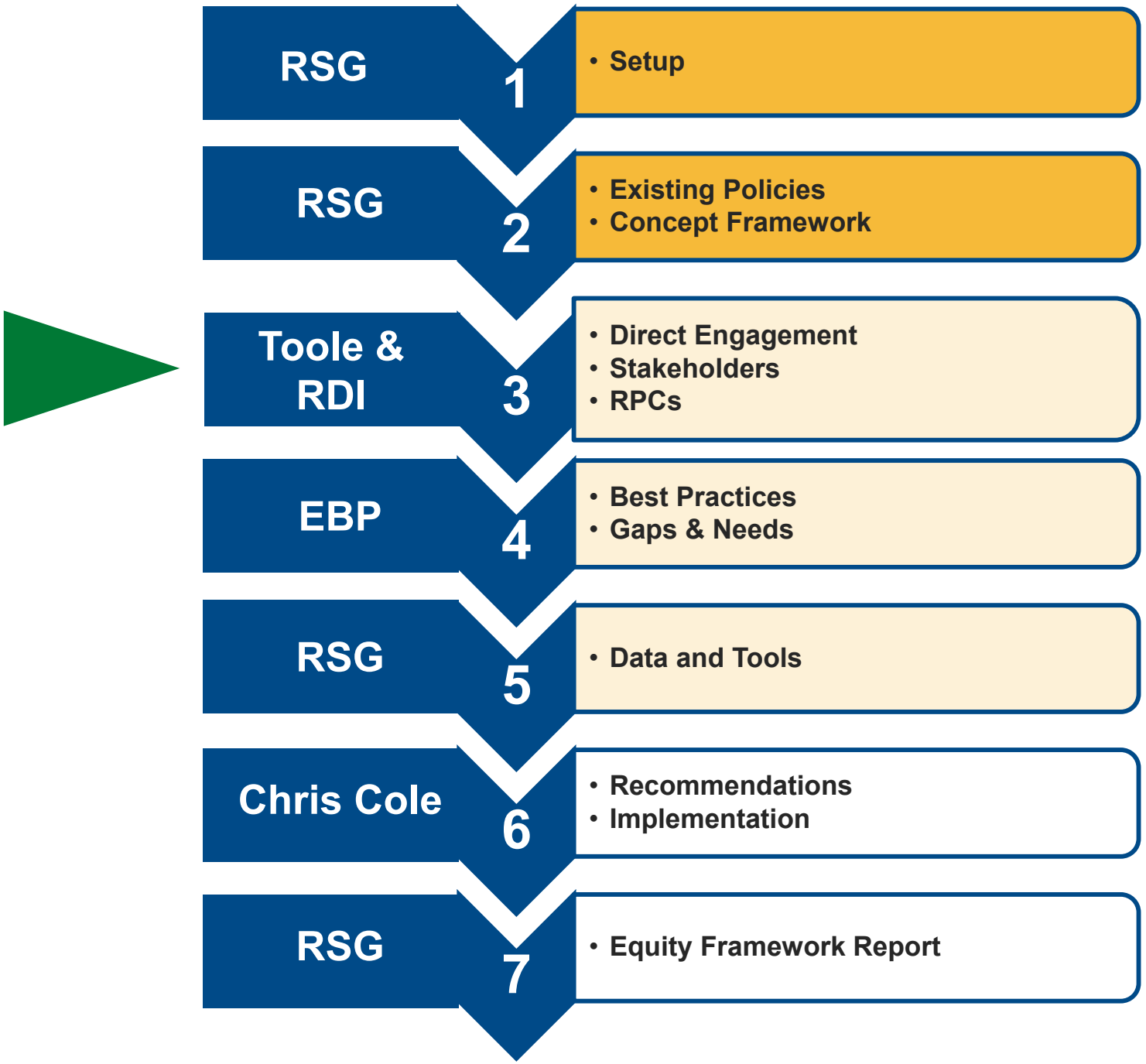
Biden-Harris Administration, as evidenced by the agency's response to the 2021 Executive Order 13895 (Advancing Racial Equity and support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government)

November 15, 2021, the President signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58, also known as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law") (BIL) into law.

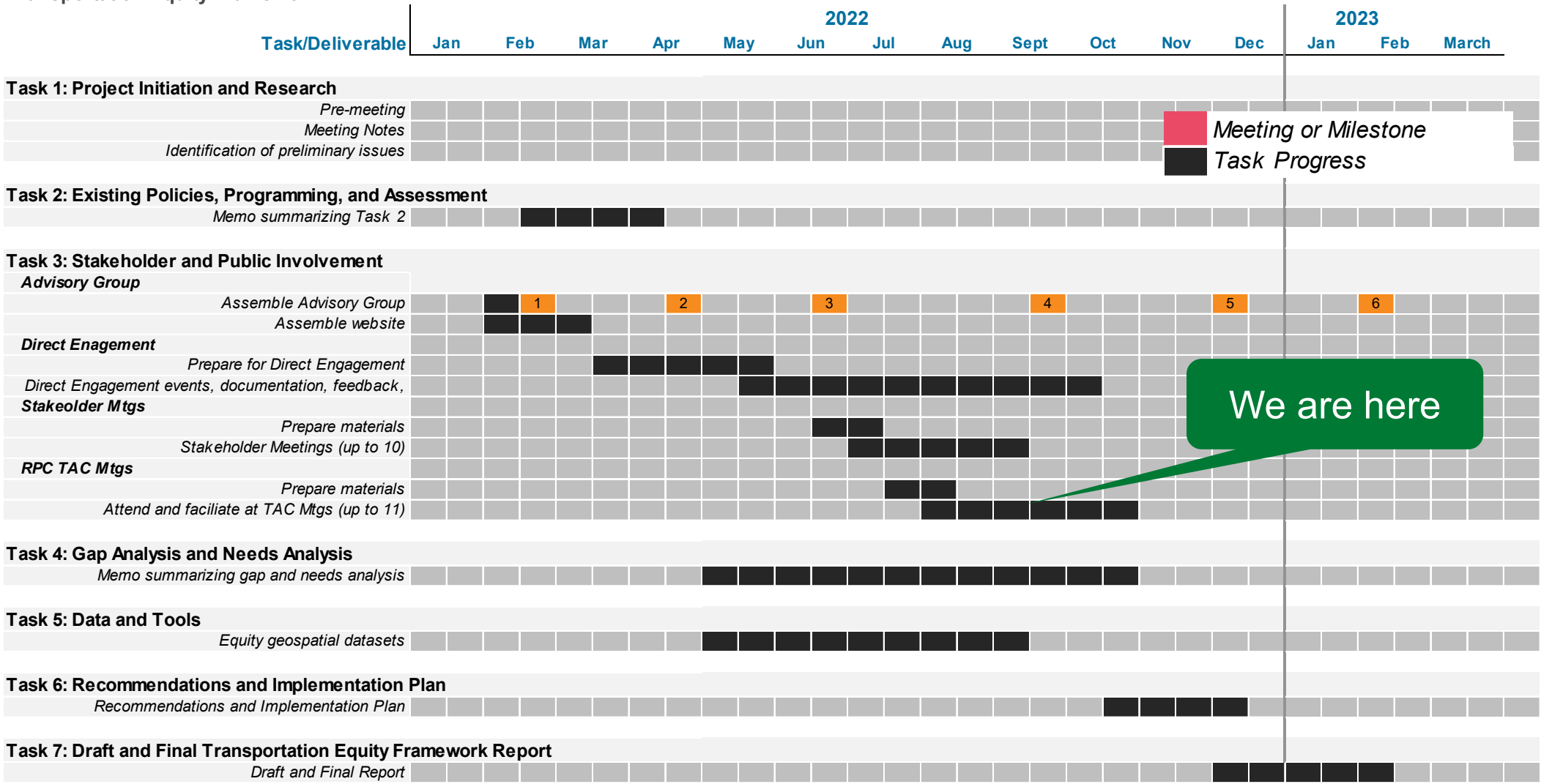
National US DOT Equity Action Plan was released in January 2022

March 28, 2022, the Biden-Harris administration released the US DOT Strategic Plan

Project Tasks


RSG
1
• Setup
RSG
2
• Existing Policies
• Concept Framework
Toole & RDI
3
• Direct Engagement
• Stakeholders
• RPCs
EBP
4
• Best Practices
• Gaps & Needs
RSG
5
• Data and Tools
Chris Cole
6
• Recommendations
• Implementation
RSG
7
• Equity Framework Report

Transportation Equity Framework



Task 3: Stakeholder and Public Involvement

Task 3: Stakeholder and Public Involvement

- We aim to bring new voices to the table and elevate those previously marginalized or underrepresented in the planning process:
  - Center **equity as a key component** in each phase of the project development process
  - Lay the groundwork for **how comprehensive public involvement should occur** in future planning processes
  - Determine tools, methods, and best practices in the **Vermont context** to fuse equity into the process

- The engagement process will serve two essential functions:
  - **Identify discrete inequities, barriers, and accountability methods** that need to be addressed in the framework.
  - **Define pathways toward implementation** to ensure the framework is actionable.

- Our partners and collaborators in this work:
  - Working Group
  - Direct Community Engagement
  - Stakeholders
  - Regional Planning Commissions

Task 3: Stakeholder and Public Involvement

	Direct Engagement	Stakeholder Engagement	Regional Planning Commissions
What			
Who	BIPOC, Low income, and other community members	Implementers and service providers --- Community organization representatives & Advocacy Groups	Conveners and coordinators --- Local Decision Makers --- Technical practitioners and planners
Anticipated Insights	Recommendations for community-driven decision making around initiatives which impact their lives.	- Challenges to integrating equity into work - Resources needed to advance equitable outcomes - Current processes/ procedures and implementation mechanisms	- Information sharing - Education on equity topics - Feedback on framework, tools, and procedures

Direct Engagement – Process

Four communities:[1]

- Winooski/Burlington BIPOC young adult community
- Northeast Kingdom elderly mobile home residents
- Bennington low-income housing community
- Rutland area low-income individuals

Variety of community engagement activities, including one-on-one interviews, community events, and door knocking in neighborhoods

Timeline:

- May 2022: Plan outreach with community liaisons
- June - September 2022: Conduct direct engagement activities
- October - November 2022: Review and synthesize information from the direct engagement activities for the plan

[1]Qing Ren and Bindu Panikkar (2021), Vermont Environmental Disparity Index, University of Vermont

Regional Planning Commissions

RPC Engagement Update

The meetings with each RPCs between July and October. Meetings will be between 1 and 2 hrs in length. Most meetings are with the Transportation Advisory Committees, invited staff, and other invited community members (i.e., equity committees)

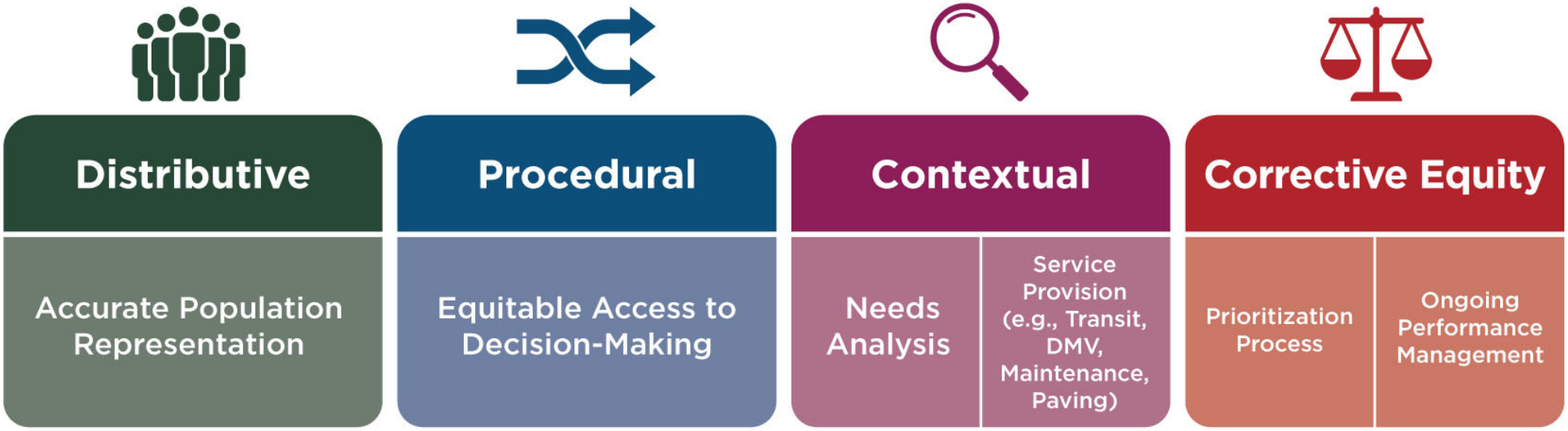
Context: Sharing Task 2 materials, any insights from Task 3 available at the time of the meeting, and describe overall scope and genesis for the work.

Actions: Collaboratively share and learn to better understand what transportation equity means for each RPC and each region in the state. Jointly discuss how equity can be embedded in the activities of the RPC.

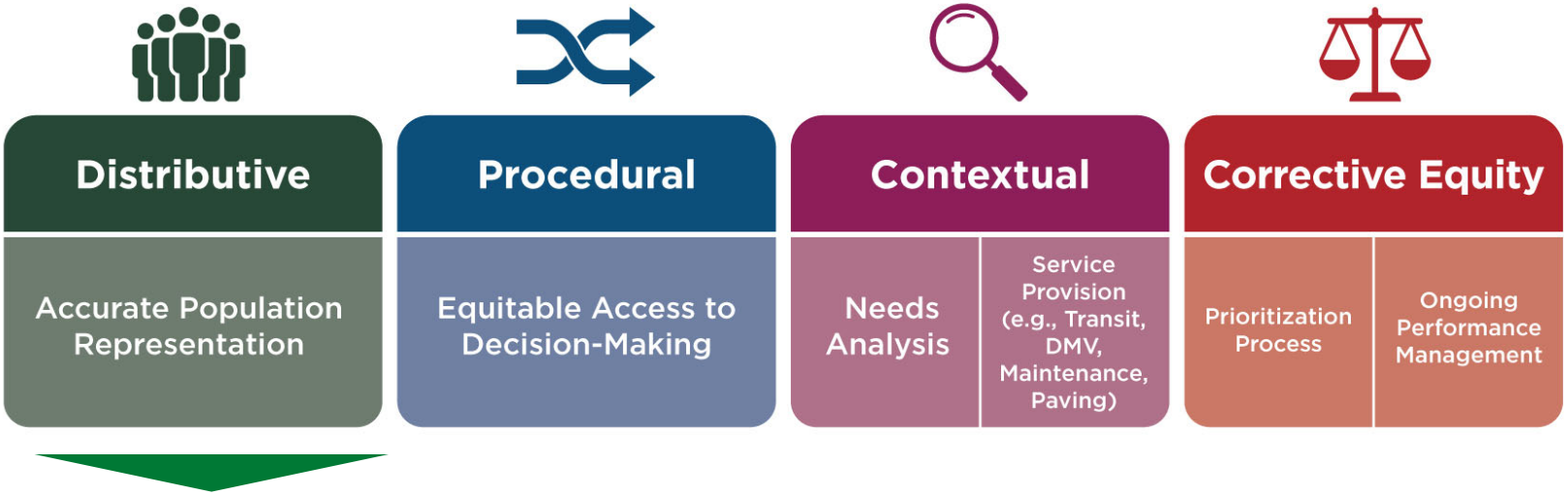
Goal: Create awareness of the project. Understand the resources and process being developed. Build communication linkages between the Agency of the RPCs to foster greater community awareness and role of equity in transportation planning. Strengthen RPC voice to the process.

Preliminary Framework Materials

Preliminary Wireframe



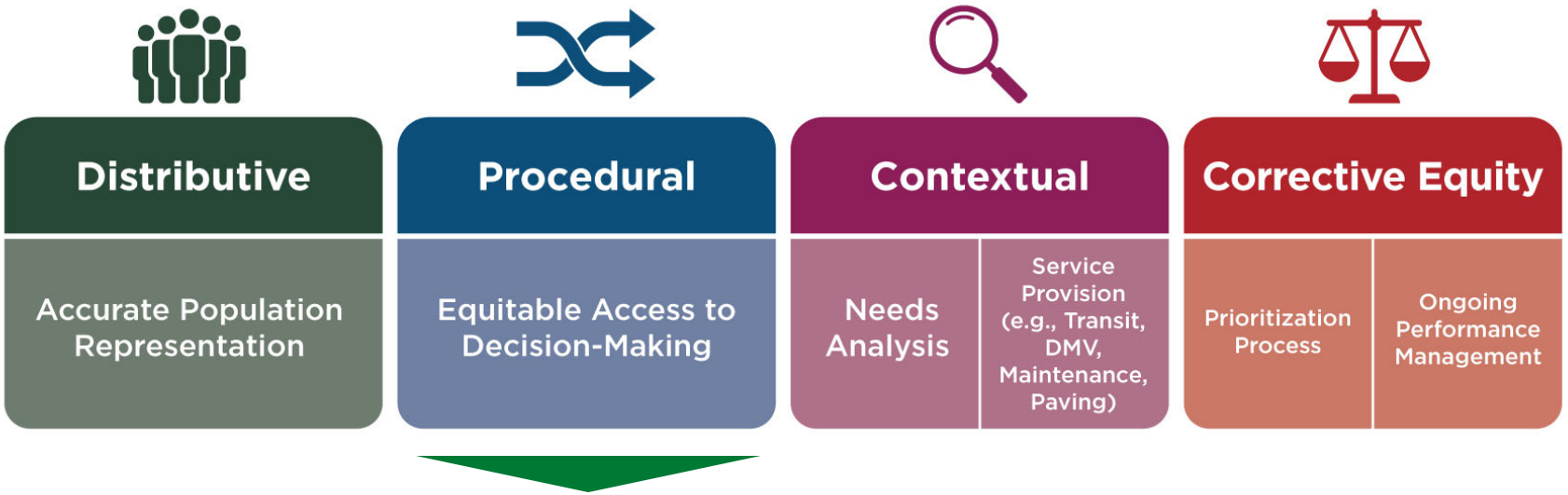
Pillars of Process Equity: Distributive



- **How can we obtain an accurate representation of the population and identify communities of concern?**
- Recognize the disparities in the allocation of resources, health outcomes, the inequities in living conditions and lack of political power place some communities in greater risk.
- It is essential that we recognize systemic underrepresentation of certain groups or individuals is common among data collection efforts and needs to be part of a proactive effort to confront these challenges.

Q: How has the RPC described or understood who lives in the region? How do we recognize, communicate, and engage with individuals and communities?

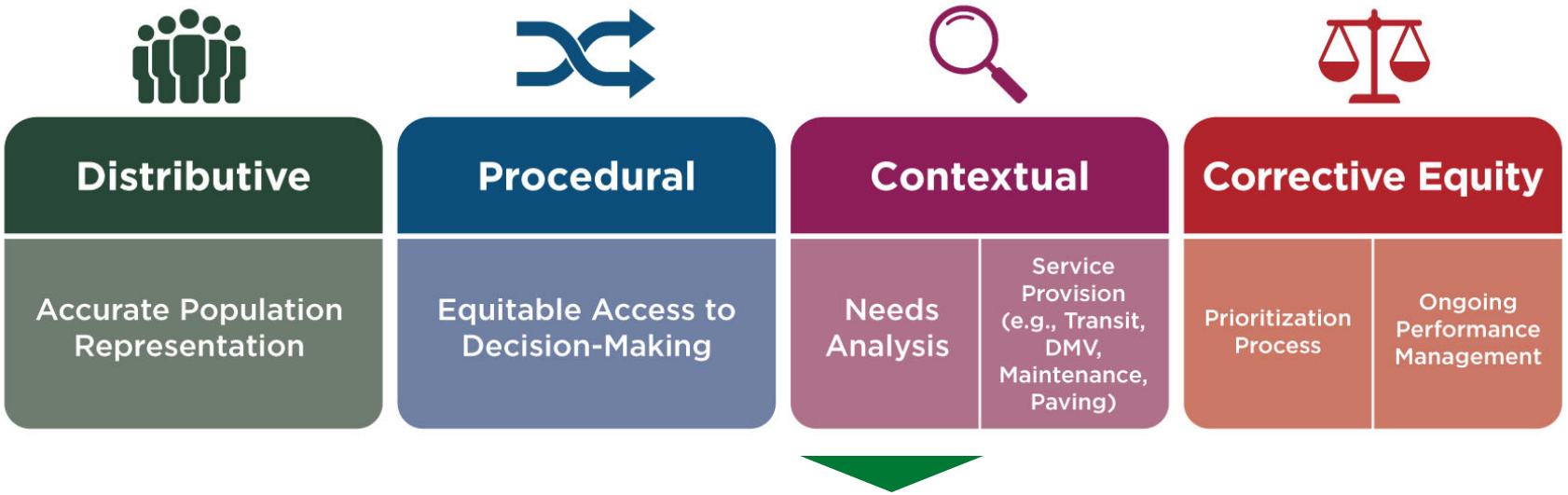
Pillars of Process Equity: Procedural



- **How can all voices be heard, participate, and engage in the planning process and create space for their involvement? Are those most burdened or affected by the plan part of the dialogue?**
- Central to this process is to bring communities to the table, particularly those who may have historically been challenged to participate, reduce barriers to involvement.
- Ask the question, “who is NOT at the table?”

Q: How has the RPC incorporated diverse, traditionally marginalized or underrepresented members of the public into the planning process?

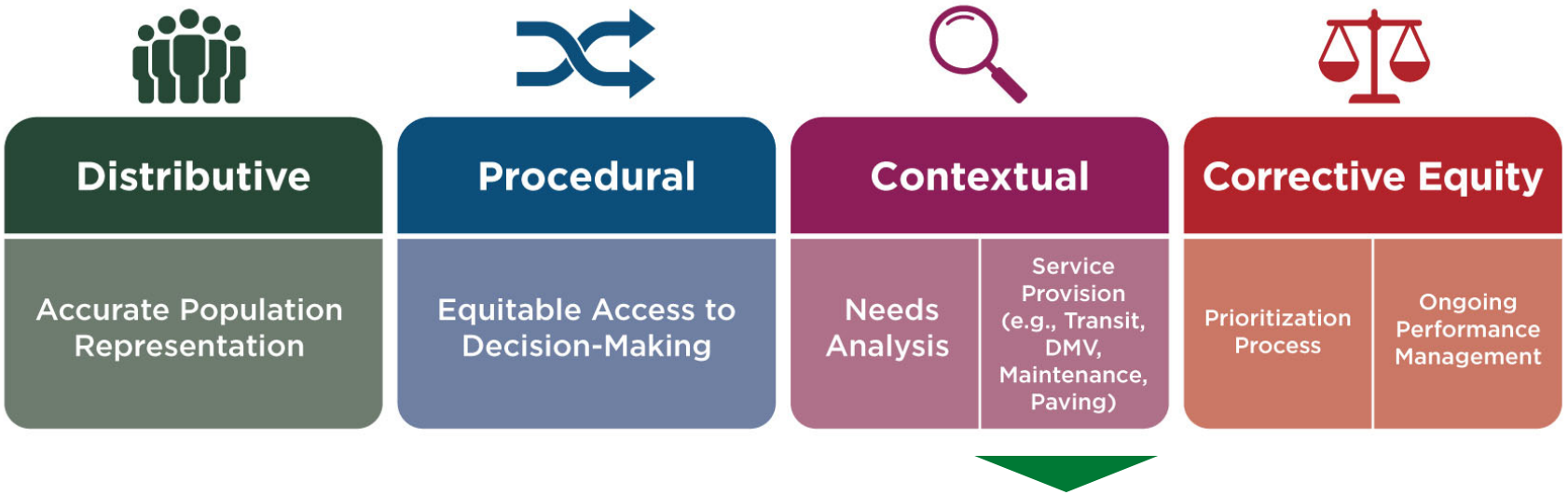
Pillars of Process Equity: Procedural



- **Are there inequities in the outcomes experienced by members of our society?**
- Realizing the context and historical perspective of our work seeks to understand the role that previous decisions may have had in determining today's conditions.
- We must strive to improve the lives of all Vermonters and identify solutions to address existing inequities and avoid future ones.

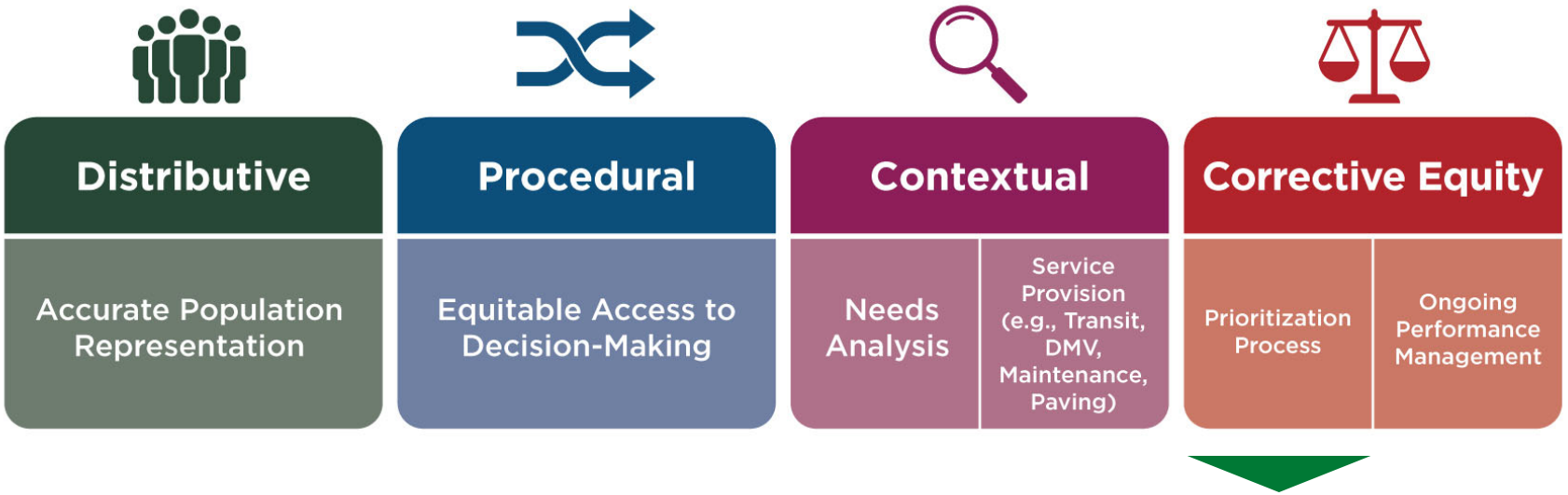
Q: Are projects being identified to address current inequities? What methods are used to identify these needs?

Pillars of Process Equity: Procedural



- Are the services of the RPC **done in an equitable manner**?
- Are the **services available** to all members of the population – regardless of ability, income, language, etc.?

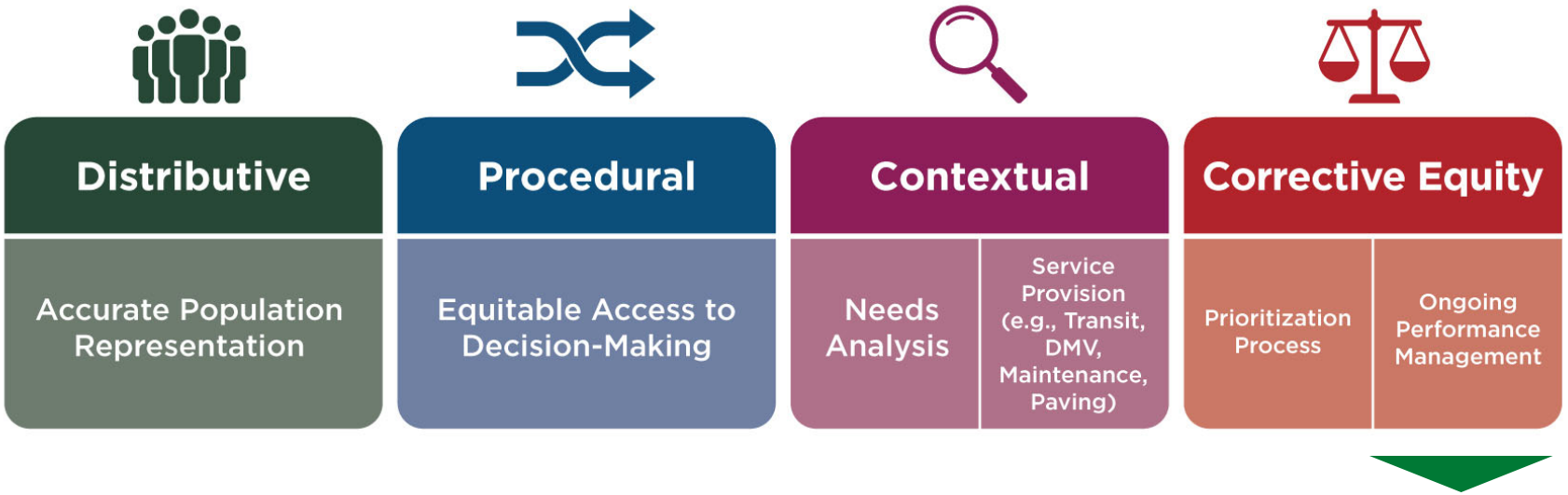
Pillars of Process Equity: Procedural



- **How will future actions (investments, policies, etc.) deliver equitable outcomes?**
- Prioritize investments including projects, policies, and services to address inequities and achieve equitable outcomes.
- Incorporating equity into the decision-making process is essential.
- Identify equity as a priority in every decision-making process.

Q: Are there any efforts to include equity based measures in project scoring and investment priorities?

Pillars of Process Equity: Procedural

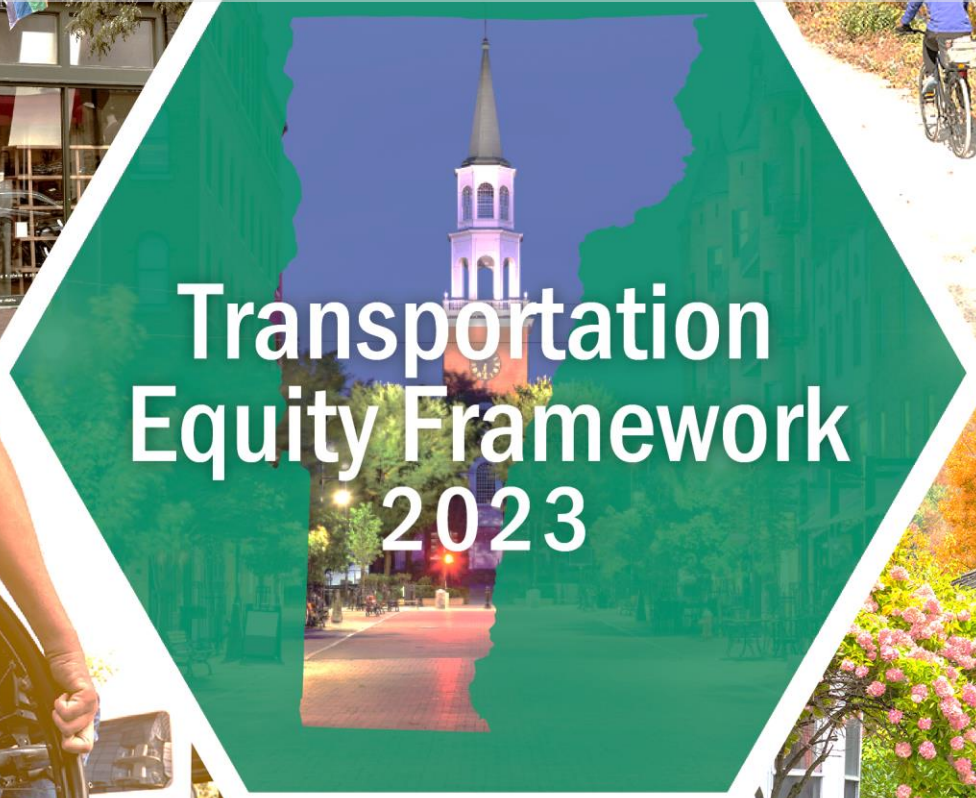


- **How will progress toward equitable outcomes be monitored and measured?**
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential to realize a just and equitable vision.
- Monitoring with the long-term goal in mind will allow for short term corrections as well as inform long-term adjustments in the upstream processes.

Q: What indicators are used? What is currently being done to track performance measures across communities?

Task 3 Appendix – Stakeholder Interview Report

December 2022



Transportation Equity Framework 2023

VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

VAPDA Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies

RSG the science of insight

Report Title:

Task 3 – Stakeholder Interview Summary

Report Prepared by:

Toole Design Group

Report Prepared for:

Vermont Agency of Transportation

For additional information regarding this report, or for questions about permissions or use of findings contained in this document, please contact:

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1.0 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS 1

1.1 LIST OF INTERVIEWEES 1

1.2 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

1.3 FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS 2

1.3.1 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR EXTERNAL-FACING PROGRAMS 2

1.3.2 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR INTERNAL-FACING PROGRAMS 6

1.3.3 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THE EQUITY FRAMEWORK 7

1.4 ADDITIONAL CONVERSATIONS 8

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

APPENDIX B. ORGANIZED INTERVIEW ANALYSIS NOTES

1.0 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The goal of the stakeholder interviews in the VTrans Transportation Equity Framework Study was to gauge the level of understanding, reception, and maturity for implementing an equity framework for VTrans. They helped to identify the Vermont equity-seeking communities, ways to leverage approaches taken to-date, lessons learned by state departments and staff, and implementation successes and challenges. Additionally, the interviews can help build advocates for the framework.

Toole Design conducted ten stakeholder interviews between during Summer 2022 (July 18 – September 14). Interviews were each 60-90 minutes. Interviewees were provided the list of questions in advance by email and were asked if the interviews could be recorded for note-taking purposes only. Additionally, interviewees were notified that VTrans was aware of their organization participating in an interview but was asked whether they wanted their specific responses attributed to their organization or kept anonymous.

1.1 LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The interview candidates comprise representatives from within VTrans and from other state agencies as well as community-based organizations representing statewide interests. They were identified based on discussion with VTrans and the working group.

The list of VTrans, DMV, and VAPDA representatives included:

- Lori Valburn, Director of Civil Rights // Office of Civil Rights
- Erin Sisson, Deputy Chief Engineer and Ann Gammell, Chief Engineer // Highway Division
- Vicki Good, Branch Operations, Supervisor of the South Burlington Office // DMV
- Kevin Marshia, Bureau Director // Asset Management
- Ross MacDonald, Public Transit Program Manager // Public Transit
- Charlie Baker, Secretary/Treasurer of VAPDA and Executive Director of Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and Catherine Dimitruk, Chair of VAPDA and Executive Director of Northwest Regional Planning Commission

VTrans coordinated additional written responses to the interview questions from staff members in the Operations and Safety Bureau, Operations, Transportation Management Center, State Highway Safety Office, Data, and Project Delivery.

The list of community organization interviews included:

- Dorah Nkurunziza, Case Manager // Community Asylum Seekers Project (CASPVT)
- Mia Shultz, President // Rutland Area Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

- Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) (representative asked not to be identified and for responses not to be attributed to VPIRG)
- Marita Canedo, Program Coordinator // Migrant Justice

1.2 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Two interview protocols were used for the interviews:

- VTrans and DMV representatives (adapted for VAPDA)
- Community organization representatives

The protocols are provided in Appendix A.

1.3 FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Findings from the stakeholder interviews are provided below. To protect the identity of people who asked not to be identified and to have responses not attributed to their community organization, responses from community organizations are generally attributed "community organization(s)," except for a few instances where organizations (who said they wanted responses attributed to them) shared something that identifies them or requires identifying them – such as a past advocacy action or a resource that they want to share with VTrans.

Organized interview analysis notes are provided in Appendix B.

1.3.1 Key Takeaways for External-Facing Programs

This section provides findings on external-facing VTrans policies, projects, programs and services. This section includes stakeholder understanding or definition of equity, investments, and funding, as well as evaluation and accountability.

- **Definition of equity:** No formal definition of equity within VTrans or within divisions/departments and VAPDA members did not come to consistent definition agreed upon by everyone. Some people define it as equal treatment while others define it as providing extra consideration to groups in need of equity.
- **Groups in need of equity:** the groups identified by more than one interviewee include low-income communities, elderly, disabled, people discriminated against based on sexual identification or orientation, people in rural areas who lack resources, and people with language barriers. Other identified groups included groups with legal protections; people of color, who are homeless, who were previously incarcerated, and who are without cars; immigrant farmworkers, refugees or asylum seekers, and the Abenaki indigenous population.
- **Resources to identify groups in need of equity:** There was no common theme among resources used to identify groups in need of equity. Resources included statewide or agency resources, division/department resources, other project or

application requirements, and external organizations. While Highway Division Chiefs indicated that management team is supposed to use Equity Impact Worksheet, staff indicated that they do not use it or are not familiar with it. Some interviewees indicated that VTrans relies heavily on RPCs to determine affected populations and issues, though other Highway Division staff indicated that they do not collaborate with RPCs.
    - **Resources requested:** Data and information on populations and raising awareness about them
- **Challenges faced by constituency of community organizations:** reliable transportation to meet daily needs (infrequent bus schedules and lack of service where needed), lack of sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure, lack of access to nearby amenities, cost, feeling trapped if undocumented by the border, less maintained roads in rural areas, and expenses to maintain a personal vehicle.
- **Policies/Programs already in place for equity:** Only the DMV and Public Transit reported existing policies and programs. DMV programs included interpretation and no requiring documentation status. Most of Public Transit services are in service of increasing equity, including increasing access to public transit in rural areas, access to job centers from rural areas, Dial-a-Ride program, Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program, Mobility for All Program; as well as requiring a floor and ceiling for their demand response trips. There is no specific program among RPCs though some have established equity committees and/or hired consultants in efforts to increase equity. However, community organizations were not aware of any known policies or programs already in place. The challenges noted by VTrans representatives include how work is driven by people who are vocal about issues but may not include disadvantaged groups, people's lack of internet access and therefore access to transportation information, limited data, and the high cost of mass transit in a rural context.
- **Public Engagement**
    - Relies largely on local stakeholders, such as RPCs, local municipalities, local boards through providers, and engagement through citizens and law enforcement. As noted above, RPCs are relied upon heavily for the local engagement. One community organization noted that RPCs are on the frontline of collaborative decision-making. However, RPCs stated that they do not feel supported by VTrans with local engagement - that the work of local relationship building is put on them entirely, yet VTrans will make design changes without regard for community input or the path for arriving at the proposed design.
    - Engagement strategies reported by more than one interviewee included removing language barriers, compensation, and targeted engagement to specific groups or areas.

- The RPCs have their own public participation plans and noted that it was not clear who the public engagement people were at VTrans. The VTrans Public Involvement Guide is provided to the Public Transit Providers. However, Highway Division staff either do not use it or are not familiar with it.
- A challenge noted by both RPCs and Highway Division staff is outreach in rural areas. Stakeholder choices are more limited because of smaller populations, there are no natural allies because underrepresented populations are not organized, and there is less access to programs and communication.
- Most community organizations did not know of any proactive strategies that VTrans takes for equitable engagement.
- **Resources/Outcomes requested:** Most salient requests were for proactive dialogue and in-person meetings with community organizations and members with highest needs. Generally, community organizations welcome and encourage more direct engagement with and through them. Migrant Justice maintains a database of constituents and the areas with transportation needs – they have offered to share it with VTrans. Additionally, interviewees noted the importance of an institutionalized model for engagement and for VTrans to value the public feedback received on a project through either incorporating it or using a transparent process to explain how project decisions are made. Additional requests included partnership with Vermont CAP agencies focused on low-income programs, materials in more languages, and financial resources for engagement.

- **Funding Priorities / Investments:**
  - Some believe the project prioritization system (VPSP2) includes equity as a consideration, while others do not think so, including Asset Management (who runs the process).
  - No other themes arose. Few strategies were noted overall, which included working with Vermont Principals Association to get programming into schools and concentrating on disadvantaged areas and leveraging federal and state funds and cost share with partners to provide more services to people in need.
  - One frustration of the rural context voice by a VAPDA representative was that VTrans treats rural communities with minimal resources the same way they treat communities with significantly more resources, with respect to expectations and funding.
  - Most community organizations did not know of equitable VTrans funding priorities or investments, or strategies used by VTrans for more equitable investments.

- Two critiques from one community organization were on the lack of transparency on how tradeoffs are made on funding decisions and how there needs to be less of a focus on maintenance and more focus on expanding access.
- **Resources/Outcomes requested:**
  - The most salient requests among VTrans representatives were around project selection and prioritization – to include an equity framework or criterion into the project prioritization process. This was VAPDA's main concern regarding a transportation equity framework for VTrans and they had a few recommendations. These included looking at national best practices, considering *who* a project is built for (versus just whether a project is being built in a particular area), correcting a past wrong or disinvestment, and providing more support for rural communities with fewer resources and staff. VAPDA also noted that expedience on this work would be appreciated so another round of funding (in 2023) doesn't pass. There were also requests from both VTrans representatives and a community organization for more data (socioeconomic, demographic, and equity-based information) to help with project decisions.
  - The most salient requests from community organizations were around increased public transit services (more routes, higher frequency) "so people can be free to live wherever they want to." This includes consideration of how people get to school and work and learning more of what people's public transit needs are to start. One organization also expressed the importance of making driving more accessible through translation and interpretation for DMV materials and services, as well as educational materials on talking with car dealers getting bank loans and building credit.

- **Evaluation metrics / Accountability:** Few strategies regarding evaluation metrics and accountability for equity were noted by VTrans representatives. Public Transit noted the use of rider surveys and an annual route performance report. None of the community organizations knew of any evaluation or accountability strategies for equity used by VTrans.
  - **Requested Resources/Outcomes:**
    - Only Highway Division and VAPDA had requested resources/outcomes. The Highway Division expressed the need

for a clear definition of equity in tangible or operational terms. Additionally, they requested data again, as well as a survey for tracking outcomes, tools or processes that can be shared agencywide, and greater support by the agency in following policies and guidance already developed rather than pressure for making exceptions. VAPDA expressed a need for a shared statewide (beyond just VTrans) equity outcome measure to strive toward and felt that there needs to be a focus on improving income disparity and other economic criteria.

- No specific resources were noted by most community organizations. However, one community organization again expressed the need for discussions with their constituents to learn about member needs.

1.3.2 Key Takeaways for Internal-Facing Programs

This section provides findings on internal-facing VTrans policies, projects, and programs. While this is not officially part of the VTrans Transportation Equity Framework project, there is valuable feedback here on internal culture and hiring practices, including of contractors.

- **Treatment of staff:** A few VTrans representatives explained equity in terms of how they build their teams or treat their staff, which include striving for well-rounded teams with different life experiences, recognizing that every person brings something different to the table, providing flexibility with work schedules, and providing a wellness group.
- **DEI Training:** Civil Rights provides a full-day training with leadership for a deep overview of all civil rights programs and components that the office administers. They also provide trainings on DEI concepts and is continually identifying where more training on concepts is needed. However, it was noted by VAPDA that there is sexism and racism within VTrans' culture.
    - **Requested resources/outcomes:** VAPDA and one community organization called for education for VTrans staff on sexism, racism, and equity. Related, Asset Management noted a knowledge gap in establishing policies related to increasing equitable outcomes.
- **DBE Program and Directory:** Use of the DBE Program and Directory is encouraged but not mandated. Some VTrans representatives said they use it, though VAPDA was not aware of using it, noting that it had been used in the past but that the state bid system has been since instituted (and may account for the DBE program and Directory). The Civil Rights Office provides support to DBEs by providing assistance and resources, sending them newly advertised projects and RFPs, and recruitment for the program. One challenge noted by Civil Rights is it is difficult to force contractors to fulfill training

requirements on hiring women/BIPOC staff since VTrans is scrambling to spend down all the money they have been awarded.

1.3.3 Key Takeaways for the Equity Framework

- **How the framework looks:** The framework should incorporate best practices and resources from other states and provide spatial data (socioeconomic, Census Bureau). The framework should be flexible enough to apply to both capital projects and ongoing programs/services (i.e., should apply to both roads and public transit). While some requested clear guidance or even a checklist format (to make it both clear, especially to a more technical implementer, and unavoidable, for anyone that needs convincing), some wanted the equity framework to become a part of the culture with everyone onboard with the goals, visions, and objectives and with regular or everyday communication on the topic.
    - "Nothing will happen if implementation of a framework becomes a forms- and reporting-based compliance drill. Success in institutionalizing this means modifying the culture so that equity considerations become an organic part of doing business." (Highway Division OSB)
- **Implementing the framework:** Suggestions included early coordination and continual collaboration; having a model that is flexible, accessible, and intentional; providing training and onboarding new staff with framework; having dedicated staff person to be the equity point person or to work with certain populations; and having a process for improving the framework, which should be treated as a living document.
- **What the framework should accomplish:** Requests and ideas included being able to provide support for ANR (lead agency for statewide Environmental Justice Program); having more people of color on VTrans staff; more information and communication to the public; narrative sharing or help to establish a common understanding of people's personal experience; improve access to programs and services for people with language barriers. While CASPVT called for VTrans to address systemic discrimination and issues – including through regulations, policies, and culture change – some VTrans staff suggested keeping identity politics out of the framework by focusing on socioeconomic factors. Finally, a few community organizations expressed the importance of holistic thinking - requesting consideration for personal safety, access, accessibility, mobility, equity, and affordability together.
- **Suggested Front Leaders / Champions of Equity Framework**
    - Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development Division (Civil Rights)
    - Planning coordinators (Civil Rights)
    - Public Transit (Civil Rights)

- DMV – some of the maintenance and fleet division managers (Civil Rights)
- Construction section in Highway Division and Project Delivery Bureau – have come to recognize that they are face of agency (Civil Rights)
- Direct reports of Chief Engineer – can help relay the ways their groups can incorporate it best (Highway Division)
- Needs to come from top but also champions in the middle (Asset Management)
- Specific people: Michelle, Amy Bow, Bonnie (Central Vermont RPC Director), Jackie Casino (new Rail Trail Coordinator)
- NAACP – having their endorsement and validation would be valuable (NAACP)

1.4 ADDITIONAL CONVERSATIONS

In speaking with community organizations, we received recommendations for additional people and groups to speak with. VTrans may want to consider reaching out to the following to learn more about their unique perspectives and to better inform and shape the transportation equity framework.

- Dana Rowangould, Transportation Research Center at UVM
- AARP Vermont
- Vermont Center for Independent Living
- Disability Rights Vermont
- Pablo Bose, Department of Geography and Geosciences at UVM – knows a lot about challenges that face refugee communities
- Drive Electric Vermont
- Capstone Community Action

VTrans may also want to consider additional engagement with other groups who were noted to need equity, including:

- Low-income communities
- Elderly
- People who identify as LGBTQIA+
- People in rural areas
- People of color
- People who are homeless
- Abenaki population (and any other indigenous populations in Vermont)

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR VTRANS, DMV, VAPDA

Introduction

- Thank the interviewee for their time.
    - *Interviewee, thank you so much for agreeing to chat with me.*
- Introduce yourself.
    - *My name is XXX and I am a ROLE at Toole Design, a consultancy working with VTrans on developing its transportation equity framework.*
- Introduce and explain the project.
    - *I mentioned this earlier, but just a quick recap –*
    - *The goal for this project is to create a framework for how equity can become embedded into the transportation planning process for VTrans. It will set a vision, identify goals and objectives, and include an actionable implementation plan.*
    - *The framework will be informed by stakeholder interviews, like this one, as well as best practices and public engagement.*
    - *We are having conversations with representatives from VTrans and other state agencies to help us understand ways equity can be integrated and implemented into VTrans work.*
    - *We know that equity has different meanings in individual contexts, so one of our goals is to understand how you think about equity in Vermont and how you apply equity in your work. We also want to identify any successes and challenges you face or foresee in the implementation of an equity framework.*
- Outline the interview.
    - *I'm going to ask you about 15 questions. These are the same questions I provided in the list I emailed and potential follow-ups.*
    - *Again, you are welcome to skip over any question at all. Just let me know.*
    - *The whole conversation should take between 60 and 90 minutes.*
- Remind them of recording

    - *As I mentioned, I would like to record the conversation – just for notetaking purposes. Is it okay to record our conversation?*
- Ask if they have questions
    - *Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?*
- Start interview and recording.
    - *I will begin the interview and recording now.*

Interview
If participant answers one of the questions through a response for another question, skip the question.

Questions – All Interviewees

Introduction
Again, thank you, INTERVIEWEE. Can you tell me a bit about your role at DEPT/AGENCY?

Personal Approach

1. *Do you have a personal approach to bringing equity into your work?*
    - If so:
        - *What successes have you had in your role?*
        - *What challenges have you had in your role?*
        - *When you are talking about equity, how would you define it?*

Response and segue: *Equity has so many different meanings to different people and in different places and contexts.*
For VTrans staff only: *For VTrans, Environmental Justice populations (people with low-income, people of color, and people with limited English proficiency) have been determined to be groups in need of equity.*
For Public Transit staff only: *For VTrans, Environmental Justice populations (people with low-income, people of color, and people with limited English proficiency) have been determined to be groups in need of equity. Additionally, the Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan has determined that the increasing population of adults age 65 and older, especially those residing in rural areas, will face significant problems as their ability to drive becomes limited.*

1. *Are there particular groups or specific sub-groups in Vermont that we should be focusing on when we say "equity"? (Who are they?) What barriers do each of these communities face?*
2. *Have you relied on any tools or resources to identify these groups?*

For VTrans staff only:

3. *Do you use the VTrans Public Involvement Guide?*

a. If so:
    i. *Do you use the Equity Impact Worksheet?*
    If so: *What populations do you focus on with the worksheet?*
    ii. *Do you collaborate with RPCs on determining the affected populations and issues?*
    If so: *What has been your experience in working with the RPCS?*
    iii. *Do you utilize the VTrans Planning Coordinator for any of your projects?*
    If so: *What has been your experience in working the Planning Coordinator?*
    iv. *Could you describe your experience with the guide and how effective it is in helping you accomplish your goals on equity?*

4. *What (additional) resources or processes would help you in your role in working toward more equitable outcomes?*

Department or Agency Approach

5. *How does your DEPT/AGENCY define equity (formally or informally)?*
6. *Does your DEPT/AGENCY have any programs in place specifically to serve groups in need of equity?*
    a. For DMV staff only: *For example, the DMV has a number of accessibility measures in place, including UbiDuo Wireless Machines to communicate with those hearing or speaking disability and providing ASL interpreters. Additionally, the DMV does not require people to select their gender or answer citizenship questions. What were the processes in which the decisions were made to pursue these policies and programs? What other programs does your DEPT/AGENCY provide?*
    b. For Public Transit staff only: *For example, Public Transit provides several services for vulnerable populations, including: Recovery and Job Access Rides for people struggling with substance use disorders, Rides to Wellness for people to get to health appointments, and the Elders and Persons with Disabilities (E&D) Transportation Program for older adults age 60 and above and individuals with disabilities. How are decisions made to create processes and pursue policies and programs that support equity seeking populations? What other programs does your DEPT/AGENCY provide?*
7. For VTrans staff only: *Does your DEPT/AGENCY take any approaches to increase equitable outcomes through stakeholder or public engagement practices?*
    c. If so: *Could you tell me about the approaches? What has been successful about this approach? What has been challenging about this approach?*
    d. If not: *From your perspective, does VTrans as an agency take any approaches to increase equitable outcomes through stakeholder or public engagement practices?*

e. *Are there any (other) resources or processes that would be helpful in this for your DEPT/AGENCY?*

8. *Does your DEPT/AGENCY make funding decisions or have funding priorities that aim to increase equitable outcomes? This may include infrastructure investments, as well as investments in new technologies or processes (for example, investment priority communities).*
    f. If so: *Could you tell me about the approaches? What has been successful about this approach? What has been challenging about this approach?*
    g. If not: *From your perspective, does VTrans as an agency make funding decisions or have funding priorities that aim to increase equitable outcomes?*
    h. For VTrans/Asset Management staff only: *Is equity a part of the consideration in the VTrans Project Selection and Project Prioritization Process (VPSP2)?*
    If so: *How is equity taken into account in the prioritization process?*
    i. *Are there any resources or processes related to prioritizing investments that would be helpful for your DEPT/AGENCY?*
9. For VTrans/DMV staff only: *Beyond ensuring nondiscrimination through appointed Title VI liaisons, does your DEPT/AGENCY use any tools or methods to track progress towards equitable outcomes or evaluate equitable outcomes? Are there any accountability measures for progress?*
    j. If so: *Could you tell me about the tools, methods, and measures? What has been successful about these approaches? What has been challenging about these approaches?*
    k. *If not: From your perspective, does VTrans as an agency use any tools or methods to track progress towards equitable outcomes or evaluate equitable outcomes?*
    l. *For the VTrans Civil Rights Office only: The Civil Rights Office conducts Title VI and LEP specific training for employees and supervisors. What have been the successes and challenges of these training programs?*
    m. *Are there any resources or processes that would be helpful in tracking and evaluating outcomes for your DEPT/AGENCY?*
10. *The Civil Rights Office monitors the DBE Center and offers a DBE Program and Directory.*
    a. For VTrans only: For contract procurement, d*oes your DEPT/AGENCY use the DBE Program and Directory or any other methods to support companies owned by socially or economically disadvantaged individuals?*
    b. For the VTrans Civil Rights Office only: *How does the office encourage the use of the DBE Program and Directory, as well as DBE contract procurement?*
11. *Does your DEPT/AGENCY have any other approaches toward achieving more equitable outcomes?*

n. If so: *Could you tell me about the approaches? What has been successful about this approach? What has been challenging about this approach?*
o. If not: *From your perspective, does VTrans as an agency have any other approaches toward achieving more equitable outcomes?*
p. If not: *What resources or processes would be helpful for your DEPT/AGENCY in developing additional approaches?*

12. *Has your DEPT/AGENCY faced any implementation or structural barriers in establishing policies related to increasing equitable outcomes?*
    q. If so: *What barriers have you faced?*
    r. If not: *From your perspective, has VTrans as an agency faced any implementation or structural barriers in establishing policies related to increasing equitable outcomes?*
    s. *Are there any resources or processes that would be helpful to overcome or remove these barriers for establishing policies for your DEPT/AGENCY?*
    t. *How about in implementing and carrying out these policies?*

Broader Vision

Again, we are developing an equity framework to embed throughout all aspects of the Agency's work, including the DMV. It will set a vision, identify goals and objectives, and include an actionable implementation plan. Success will require that it is institutionalized and used throughout the agency.

13. *How do you see this framework being institutionalized? (What pathways could be used? Are there people you'd see as champions? Are there divisions that could be front leaders?)*
14. *What resources or processes do you think could be institutionalized for a transportation equity framework?*
15. *What would a successful transportation equity framework for VTrans look like from your perspective?*

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

- Thank the interviewee for their time.
    - *Interviewee, thank you so much for agreeing to chat with me.*
- Introduce yourself.
    - *My name is XXX and I am a ROLE at Toole Design, a consultancy working with VTrans on developing its transportation equity framework.*
- Introduce and explain the project.
    - *I mentioned this earlier, but just a quick recap –*
    - *VTrans is the statewide Agency of Transportation that plans, implements, and maintains the transportation system in Vermont. This includes essential DMV functions for ensuring the safety of the vehicles and licensure of drivers using the system (cars, trucks, snowmobiles, etc.). While the Agency is the statewide entity, the state has delegated responsibility to the eleven Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) to be the local authority to engage in regional planning, project development, and implementation. The Regional Planning Commissions and the Agency engage with a broad range of stakeholders – like municipalities, government bodies, advocacy organizations and other public organizations.*
    - *The goal for this project is to create a framework for how equity can become embedded into the transportation planning process for VTrans. It will set a vision, identify goals and objectives, and include an actionable implementation plan.*
    - *The framework will be informed by stakeholder interviews, like this one, as well as best practices and public engagement.*
    - *We are having conversations with representatives from VTrans and other state agencies – as well as community-based organizations - to help us understand ways equity can be integrated and implemented into VTrans work.*
    - *We know that equity has different meanings in individual contexts, so one of our goals is to understand how you think about equity in Vermont and how you have found VTrans to apply equity in their work. We also want to identify any successes and challenges you foresee in the implementation of an equity framework.*
- Ask how they want their responses to be identified.
    - *How would you like your interview responses to be identified in our report? This document will be submitted to VTrans and used by other team members. VTrans is aware we are speaking with someone from your organization and we can provide direct attribution for your contribution or share your responses anonymously. There may be a case where we*

share something specific to your responses beyond general themes. If you would prefer to remain anonymous or do not what your responses attributed to the organization, please let us know.

- Outline the interview.
  - *I'm going to ask you about 10 questions. These are the same questions I provided in the list I emailed and potential follow-ups.*
  - *Again, you are welcome to skip over any question at all. Just let me know.*
  - *The whole conversation should take between 60 and 90 minutes.*
- Remind them of recording
  - *As I mentioned, I would like to record the conversation – just for notetaking purposes. Is it okay to record our conversation?*
- Ask if they have questions
  - *Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?*
- Start interview and recording.
  - *I will begin the interview and recording now.*

Interview

If participant answers one of the questions through a response for another question, skip the question.

Introduction

Again, thank you, INTERVIEWEE. Can you tell me a bit about ORGANIZATION and your role at ORGANIZATION?

1. *What challenges does your constituency face in accessing transportation or mobility options to meet daily needs? For example, you might consider the presence and quality of pedestrian and bike facilities, transit service, and roadways.*
2. *What are the challenges associated with the rural and dispersed nature of the state and its destinations?*
3. *What would a successful transportation equity framework for VTrans look like from your perspective? What would you like to see come from the transportation equity framework?*
4. *From your experience, does VTrans have any policies or programs in place to meet needs specifically identified by ORGANIZATION'S constituency?*
   a. If so: *Can you tell me about these policies and programs? What is good about these policies and programs? What is missing from these policies and programs?*
5. *Has VTrans or any of the regional planning councils engaged or involved you or your organization in the planning or design of any policies, programs, or projects?*
   a. If so:

    i. *What were you engaged or involved in and what ways were you engaged/involved?*
    ii. *How was your organization identified for engagement or involvement?*
    iii. *What has been good about the experience(s)?*
    iv. *What has been challenging about the experience(s)?*
6. *From your experience, does VTrans take any approaches to increase equitable outcomes through stakeholder or public engagement practices (for example, through sharing needs and issues or collaborative decision making)?*
    a. If so: *Could you tell me about the approaches? What has been good about this approach? What has been missing from this approach?*
    b. *Are there any established practices that VTrans uses in engaging with ORGANIZATION?* If so:
        i. *Could you describe these practices?*
        ii. *Can you tell me about a time when these practices have been successful?*
        iii. *Can you tell me about a time when these practices have not worked?*
    c. *Is VTrans consistent with their engagement approach(es)?*
    d. *Do you have any recommendations for VTrans in terms of engaging with your constituents or other organizations like yours?*
    e. *Are there ways that VTrans can connect through your organization's existing practices around engaging with government agencies or otherwise support them?*
7. *From your experience, does VTrans use any tools or methods to track progress towards equitable outcomes or evaluate equitable outcomes? Do they use any accountability measures for progress?*
    a. If so: *Could you tell me about the tools, methods, and measures? Have the results of the tracking/evaluation reflected the experiences of your constituents? What has been good about these approaches? What has been missing from these approaches?*
    b. *Do you have any recommendations for VTrans with regards to evaluation and accountability for more equitable outcomes?*
    c. *Is there anything you want to share about any processes you use for identifying or tracking outcomes?*
8. *What do you think about how VTrans prioritizes investments? This may include project investments, as well as investments in new technologies or processes.*
    a. *From your perspective, does VTrans prioritize increasing equitable outcomes in investment decisions?*
        i. If so: *What has been your experience with how VTrans prioritizes producing more equitable outcomes?*
    b. *What projects are not being prioritized or invested in that should be?*

c. *Do you have any recommendations for VTrans in terms of more equitable decision-making with regards to investment priorities?*

9. *From your experience, does VTrans have any other approaches toward achieving more equitable outcomes?*
    a. If so: *Could you tell me about the approaches? What has been successful about this approach? What has been challenging about this approach?*

Again, we are developing an equity framework to embed throughout all aspects of VTran's work, including the DMV. It will set a vision, identify goals and objectives, and include an actionable implementation plan. Success will require that it is institutionalized and used throughout the agency.

10. *Are there any resources or processes that you would recommend for VTrans in institutionalizing a transportation equity framework?*
11. *Are there resources (as a result of this framework) that would help your efforts in working with VTrans to achieve transportation equity?*

Information to include in email with list of questions

VTrans is responsible for planning, developing, implementing, and maintaining transportation infrastructure, including but not limited to roads, bridges, state-owned railroads, airports, park and ride facilities, bicycle facilities, pedestrian paths, rail trails, public transportation facilities, and services. VTrans is the statewide Vermont agency responsible for administering and facilitating grants and financial support for transportation entities in Vermont including public transit services, rail, and aviation.
VTrans interacts with all State agencies, the United States Department of Transportation and other federal agencies, numerous regional and state governments, international jurisdictions and cross-border organizations, local governments, transit agencies, airports, railroads, and the other private and non-profit entities engaged in transportation-related activities.

Department of Motor Vehicles
The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is housed within VTrans. The DMV is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the state's motor vehicle laws and regulations. In this capacity, it serves the motoring public through driver licensing, vehicle registration, tax collecting, enforcement, and educational activities.

Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) is the statewide association for the State of Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs). RPCs provide technical assistance to municipalities and act as a link between municipal affairs and state government. RPCs work in fields that directly and indirectly affect the public at large: land use, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental quality, and more.

APPENDIX B. ORGANIZED INTERVIEW ANALYSIS NOTES

EXTERNAL-FACING PROGRAMS

Defining Equity

- No formal definition of equity (Highway Division, VAPDA)
  - Work with other agency partners to come up with understand of equity (Highway Division)
  - RPCs tried to define it last summer but did not come to a consistent definition among the RPCs – people were in different places of understanding with what equity means (VAPDA)
- Personal approaches to equity included providing equal treatment (Highway Division Ops, Asset Management)
  - Providing consistent answers to any person or town (Highway Division Ops)
  - Considering all users and modes (Asset Management)
- Some personal approaches included providing extra consideration to particular groups or populations (Highway Division, Highway Division OSB, Public Transit)
  - Inclusion – asking who needs to be involved and why (Highway Division)
  - Common sense/understanding that some groups (socioeconomic criteria, not gender or race) need consideration in context of transportation planning (Highway Division OSB)
  - Serving people with greatest *needs* - not choices - with a focus on those with mobility challenges or restrictions (Public Transit)
- Civil Rights noted that some people conflate equity and equality (Civil Rights). While some noted that equity is defined as providing equal access to the same opportunities (Highway Division, DMV, AOT TMC), some also noted that all things should be equal or that equity is being fair and impartial (Highway Division, Highway Division OSB, Highway Division Ops, Highway Division Data). Both SHSO and Public Transit defined equity as not providing equal resources and equity as providing more resources where needed for a particular group or geographic area (Highway Division SHSO, Public Transit).
- Community organizations may focus more on procedural equity while VTrans might focus more on service delivery (community organization)

Groups in need of equity

Defined by VTrans representatives:

- Identified by more than one interviewee
  - Low-income communities (Civil Rights, Asset Management, Public Transit)

        - People in need of job access (Public Transit)
        - People getting priced out of living where they work (Public Transit)
    - Elderly (Civil Rights, Public Transit)
    - Disabled (Civil Rights, Public Transit, VAPDA)
    - People with substance abuse issues (Civil Rights, Public Transit)
    - People in rural areas who lack resources (Highway Division, Asset Management, Public Transit, VAPDA)
    - Based on sexual identity or orientation / LGBTQ+ (Civil Rights, VAPDA)
- Other identified groups
    - Groups with legal protection under federal or state law, such as Title VI (Civil Rights)
    - Communities of color (Civil Rights)
    - Homeless (Civil Rights)
    - Previously incarcerated (Civil Rights)
    - Socioeconomically disadvantaged (Highway Division OSB)
    - People without cars, by choice or not (Highway Division/Ops)
    - Immigrant farmworkers, documented and undocumented (VAPDA)
    - Refugees or asylum seekers (DMV)
    - People with language barriers / limited English proficiency (DMV, Public Transit, VAPDA)
    - Abenaki indigenous population (VAPDA)

Resources to identify groups:

- Resources
    - Statewide or Agency (Highway Division, Asset Management))
        - EJ Screen (Highway Division)
        - Civil Rights Office (Highway Division)
        - Project priority system looking at health and economic access, data on jobs (Asset Management)
        - State Management Plan (Public Transit)
        - Vermont Climate Action Plan – Just Transition Section has definition of frontline communities (Public Transit)
    - Division/Department (Public Transit)
        - Demand response / Dial-a-ride services (Public Transit)
        - Public Transit Policy Plan (Public Transit)
    - Other project or application requirements (Public Transit)

        - CMAQ application – deep dive on demographics, requires thinking about who is being served and expected outcomes of access (Public Transit)
    - External organizations (Public Transit)
        - Network of partners, including sister agencies, Agency of Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Health (Public Transit)
- While Highway Division Chiefs indicated that management team is supposed to use Equity Impact Worksheet (Highway Division), staff indicated that they do not use it or are not familiar with it (Highway Division OSB, Highway Division Ops, Highway Division TMC, Highway Division SHSO, Highway Division Data, Highway Division Project Delivery)
- Collaboration with RPCs (Highway Division, Asset Management, Public Transit)
    - While Highway Division Chiefs indicated that they collaborate with RPCs to determine affected populations and issues (AOT), staff indicated that they do not collaborate with RPCs on this (Highway Division OSB, Highway Division Ops, Highway Division TMC, Highway Division SHSO, Highway Division Data, Highway Division Project Delivery)
    - For project selection and prioritization (Asset Management)
    - RPCs sit on boards and contribute to CMAQ application (Public Transit)

Resources requested:

- Make data and information on these populations available / in the forefront – raise awareness

Challenges that Constituency Faces

Reported by community organizations

- Transportation to meet daily needs – going to shop, doctor appointments, grocery shop, work, drop children off at school. Buses are not frequent enough and do not go to all the locations where service is needed (two community organizations)
- Lack of sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure for daily travel, not just recreation (two community organizations)
- Transportation access is exacerbated by lack of access to amenities, such as grocery stores, and culturally-sensitive goods and services, such as for food or hair (community organization).
- Cost is a huge issue for many low-income Vermonters (two community organizations)
- Being close to the border while undocumented makes people trapped
- Rural challenges
    - Less access to amenities, including culturally-sensitive amenities - long distances to get to destinations (two community organizations)
    - More dirt roads and less maintenance
- Expensive to maintain personal vehicles, including car inspection costs

Policies/Programs

Responses from VTrans representatives

- Providing interpreters (DMV)
    - For road tests (DMV), which was advocated for by CASPVT and having road test and learner's permit test in English and Spanish (CASPVT)
    - Through phone system (DMV)
- Public Transit expanded the ¼-mile algorithm on Google to show people transit options to provide people in rural locations more options if they live outside of a ¼ mile from the stop (Public Transit)
- Public Transit worked with Old Spokes to provide bikes as first/last mile option for people within 5 miles of a transit stop and is considering piloting an e-bike program (Public Transit)
- Most of Public Transit services are to serve people in need – going to job centers in the context of rural areas, Dial-a-Ride program, Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program, Mobility for All in central Vermont (anyone can get a ride if they schedule in advance)
- Public Transit sets rule for all providers requiring a floor and ceiling for demand response trips
- No specific program among RPCs but some have established equity committees and hired consultants in equity efforts for some clarity on what they should be doing (VAPDA)
- Not requiring documentation status for drivers licenses (community organization)
- Software for scheduling and dispatch trips for elderly and people with disabilities (Public Transit)

Challenges to equity

- Work is often driven by public input and requests – inputs may be biased toward groups that "make noise" while other groups that do not are at a disadvantage (Highway Division Ops)
- Travel information is available to people with internet access and transportation – but that is not everyone (Highway Division TMC)
- Limited data (Highway Division Data)
- Rural context and dispersed population that drives up the cost of providing mass transit (Public Transit)

Community Organizations were not aware of any known programs.

Public Engagement Practices

Responses from VTrans representatives

- Public engagement is initiated if a project makes significant changes (Highway Division)

    - There has been increased emphasis to at least consider public engagement in various actions/decisions (Highway Division)
- Not one-size-fits-all approach – tailored to each area (Highway Division)
- Work with local stakeholders (Highway Division, Public Transit)
    - RPCs (Highway Division)
        - VTrans puts the work of local relationships onto RPCs completely (not a collaboration) and RPCs do not feel supported, e.g., VTrans will sometimes change a project design without consideration for the work that RPCs put into designing it and the communities they engaged (VAPDA)
    - Local municipalities (Highway Division)
    - Local boards through providers (Public transit)
    - Successful engagement through combination of citizens and law enforcement who engage the public together (Highway Division /SHSO)
- Seeing more community-driven input (Highway Division)
- Equitable engagement strategies
    - Engagement at fairs and schools – but large events in rural areas is challenging (Highway Division /SHSO)
    - Forums (Public Transit)
    - Mobility Committees – people who weigh in on budget and spectrum of people who need services (Public Transit)
    - Removing language barriers (VAPDA, Highway Division SHSO)
        - Paying attention to top languages to provide translated materials (VAPDA)
        - Focus groups in other languages (VAPDA)
        - Providing translated materials (Highway Division SHSO)
    - Compensation
        - Compensating people for their time in focus groups (VAPDA)
        - Considered (during interview) that people should be paid for their time to provide feedback (Public Transit)
    - Targeted engagement to specific groups or areas (VAPDA, Highway Division SHSO)
        - Hiring high school students to engage their families (VAPDA)
        - Focus groups with people with below median income (VAPDA)
        - Geotargeted messaging to reach rural areas (Highway Division /SHSO)
- Use of VTrans Public Involvement Guide

    - While Highway Division Chiefs said they use the guide (Highway Division), staff members of specific teams said they do not use it or are not familiar with it (Highway Division OSB, Highway Division Ops, Highway Division TMC, Highway Division SHSO, Highway Division Data, Highway Division Project Delivery)
    - Public Transit makes available to their providers (Public Transit)
    - MPOs have their own public participation plans.

Challenges

- How to approach outreach and required public meetings with an eye toward equity (Public Transit)
- How to get / incentivize people to provide feedback that are not involved or interested (Public Transit)
    - How to get 80%-90% participation
- Outreach in rural areas is challenging (VAPDA, Highway Division/SHSO)
    - Stakeholder choices are limited because population is much smaller - can't ask the same stakeholder to participate in everything. How to do outreach in a way that's meaningful and respectful and doesn't tokenize (VAPDA)
    - No natural allies because underrepresented populations are not organized / there are no existing groups like in Chittenden County (except Abenaki Council) – have to build 1-to-1 relationships with individuals (VAPDA)
    - Less access to programs and receiving messaging (Highway Division/SHSO)
- Not clear who the public engagement people are at VTrans (VAPDA)

Responses from community organizations

- Don't know of any strategies that VTrans takes to increase equitable engagement or of proactive VTrans strategies (three community organizations)
- RPCs are on frontline of collaborative decision-making – they do a good job
    - TACs are bright spots for increasing equitable outcomes - outreach to disadvantaged communities to make sure their input is included
- Pace for equitable change is too slow
- Gap in relationships with statewide groups
- Lack of engagement around the design of any policies, programs, projects (all four community organizations)
    - VTrans is not proactive but community organization advocates for improvements and investments and sometimes there is change (two community organizations)

Resources/Outcome requested

- New model of public and stakeholder engagement – how to engage effectively (Civil Rights)

    - Current guide is limited to engagement for construction projects (Civil Rights)
    - Some RPCs are using their own models but some are limited in resources (Civil Rights)
    - Institutionalize public engagement with considerations of what groups should be involved and engagement strategies to use (VAPDA)
- VTrans to value the feedback received from community engagement / let it affect the actual project or program delivery, so effort is not for nothing, and community members do not waste their time (VAPDA, community organization)
    - Need process to explain why input/feedback was not incorporated
    - Process that shares how they arrived at project decisions
    - Interested in helping to develop or review plans – but feedback must be taken into consideration
    - Unclear if this project is checking a box or they truly want to engage communities
- Engage in dialogue proactively (two community organizations)
    - "No magic sauce" - more interaction is better
    - Build trust with local organizations
    - More connection to community and understanding of lived experiences and local contexts
    - Approach / Organize community organizations to come to table and learning about member challenges and needs
    - Maintain list of stakeholder groups to communicate timely and relevant information with
    - Visit offices and staff of community organizations
    - To explain what VTrans goals are and see the opportunities to align goals with community goals
    - Engage those with highest needs. Community organizations focus on distributional equity – getting people access. A big driver of distributional equity is providing people on the ground a substantial voice
    - Ways of engagement
        - Equity advisory committee with partners from underrepresented communities to provide continuity in how to address equity on a regular basis and bring a missing perspective (VAPDA)
        - Meet people that lead campaigns and programs – especially those participating in legislative efforts (community organization)
        - Address needs expressed by community members based on needs assessment or discussions/interviews through policy change or providing more service (community organization)
        - Meetings regarding transportation similar to meetings regarding housing (community organization)
        - Migrant Justice maintains a database of constituents - of the people they support and provide services to. They take note of different areas where people don't need transportation support. When they have events, they have

a lot of volunteers that provide transportation services so that people can attend and participate. They know which areas are more difficult to connect to, and how various work schedules impact transportation. They can share this information with VTrans.

- Partner with the 5 CAP agencies focused on low-income programs in the state
- Provide educational materials in more languages (community organization)
- Financial resources (Public Transit)
    - To help people attend public meetings (Public Transit)
    - Interpretation (Public Transit)

Funding Priorities and Investments

Strategies for equitable investments

- Project prioritization system (VPSP2) is said by some to include equity as a consideration (Highway Division/OSB) while others say that there is no equity criteria in the system (VAPDA)
    - It is more data-driven than previous system - provides transparency and helps to make informed decisions while taking away background noise (Asset Management)
    - Background: 2nd year of new system. Public is not aware of intricacies of process, though information is available to them. Most people don't care if things are working. (Asset Management)
- Asset management level life cycle analysis has a ranking system and 8 criteria (including safety, mobility, asset condition, environment, health access) to make prioritization decisions (Asset Management)
- Working with Vermont Principals Association to get programming into schools and request to concentrate on bringing equity to disadvantaged areas (Highway Division/SHSO)
- Leverage federal and state funds and cost share with partners (e.g., Human Services) to provide more resources to needs riders (Public Transit)

Challenges

- Data availability for project prioritization (Asset Management)
- Determining questions to ask for project prioritization. There are questions on a range of topics, including safety and environment (Asset Management)
- Adding equity criteria to project prioritization process would *not* be a challenge (Asset Management)
- People haven't built credit for car ownership – difficult to get a bank loan (community organization)

Responses from VTrans representatives

- Civil Rights Office does not have direct influence currently on bringing equity considerations to process (Civil Rights)
- Equity is not and should not be used as a singular criterion – it's one factor in a larger weighting scheme involving safety, municipal desires, community input, cost, engineering feasibility, right of way, environmental realities, etc. (Highway Division/OSB)
- 70% of public transit riders is a needs rider – people that have no other transportation options. However, Public Transit also competes for SOV trips through investment into bus shelters to make them solar-powered and provide unique designs that show respect to riders and make public transit attractive, as well as in electric buses (hoping to be fully electric in 20-30 years) (Public Transit)
- VTrans treats rural communities with minimal resources the same as places with significantly more resources – same support with respect to expectations and funding (VAPDA)

Responses from community organizations

- Unclear who the target of public transportation services is and whether it was based on need of specific counties or municipalities
- Not enough to rely on volunteers, who are all elders who are retired and driving at night or very early in the mornings is really challenging
- Does not know of any strategies to prioritize investments
- Has not been invited to any process to prioritize investment
- Encouraged by climate investments that have been focused on equity but there's always room for improvement
- Desire for micro transit to expand but response from VTrans was that they have other priorities
- Lack of transparency for advocates on how tradeoffs in how decisions on funding priorities are made – lack of systematic communication and have to build relationships for the information
- Need less of a focus on maintenance and more focus on expanding access

Resources/Outcome requested

- Making equity a consideration
    - Equity framework needs to be incorporated into selection and prioritization of projects (Asset Management)
    - Include Equity Impact Assessment in funding decisions (Civil Rights)
    - Consideration for whether there is perpetuation of disinvestment, e.g., more scoring points for bike/ped grant if project is part of connected network (VAPDA)
- Equity needs to be a consideration in every program – not just for Public Transit (VAPDA)

- More support for rural communities that have less staff – not just for equity work but also for how programs/projects are implemented (VAPDA)
- Public transit to provide more routes and higher frequency of service to serve communities in need (two community organizations)
    - "so people can be free to live wherever they want to"
    - Consider how kids get to school, how people get to work
    - There should be enough options to catch another bus if someone misses one
- Public transit needs assessment (Public Transit, two community organizations)
    - For people with low-income, don't have a car, asylum seekers (community organization)
    - Forum to learn needs (community organization)
- Be more accessible for obtaining a learner's permit and drivers license for asylum seekers and immigrants, such as through translation and interpretation services (community organization)
- Increase accessibility for car ownership, including how to talk with car dealers, getting bank loans, and training/education sessions to provide info on building credit (community organization)
- Data to help with project decisions (Highway Division, community organization)
    - Socioeconomic and demographic data (Highway Division)
    - Equity-based data to help determine how to get money into underfunded and underdeveloped areas. Process that differentiates between broad-based budget items and items that improve the lives of people with significant transportation-based challenges through (community organization)
- Changes to prioritization process is needed (Asset Management, VAPDA)
    - Needs tweaks to existing 8 selection criteria (Asset Management)
    - Equity framework can produce a 9th criterion for equity (Asset Management)
    - Fixing a past wrong / correct disinvestment needs to be a priority (VAPDA)
    - Develop equity criteria before next round of capital projects are selected so a year isn't lost (VAPDA)
    - Need to consider who a project is being built for – not just whether a project is being built in a particular area, e.g., a bypass doesn't benefit local residents – may need to consider qualitative criteria (VAPDA)
    - Look at national best practices on prioritizing projects (VAPDA)

Evaluation Metrics and Accountability
Responses from VTrans representatives

- Current framework includes consideration for access to jobs and serving lower income populations, impacts of projects on jobs and economy, and modal equity and connectivity (Asset Management)
- Strategies
    - Mandated to submit federally-mandated reports each year. Use of internal dashboards (Civil Rights)
    - Agency has none or staff is not aware of any (Highway Division OSB, Highway Division SHSO). However, there are follow-up surveys to determine concerns and whether they were addressed as well as the NEPA process (Highway Division). And social media and media algorithms help track some (Highway Division SHSO)
    - DMV mentioned tracking length of service and queuing system (DMV)
    - Public Transit has rider surveys and an annual route performance report showing cost per passenger, ridership, investments, and percentage of budgets for types of services (Public Transit)

Responses from community organizations

- Doesn't know of any (all four community organizations)

Requested resources

- Small agency so tools/processes get shared (Highway Division)
- Have to be focused on how to improve income disparity and economic criteria, e.g., percentage of population able to reach particular job centers (VAPDA)
    - CCRPC has been tracking income disparity but numbers have not changed in 10 years (VAPDA)
- Need shared statewide equity outcome measure to strive toward, not just for VTrans (VAPDA)
- Survey for tracking and evaluating outcomes (Highway Division)
- Socioeconomic and demographic data (Highway Division)
- Personal discussions or interviews with constituents of community organizations for accurate and genuine discussion about needs (community organization)
- Need clear definition of equity for staff – feels intangible and expectations are unclear (Highway Division, Highway Division OSB)
    - Define and operationalize the term - be very specific about what it means in real terms (Highway Division OSB)
    - Greater support for following policies and guidance that were developed rather than pressure for making exceptions (Highway Division Ops)

INTERNAL-FACING PROGRAMS

Definition of equity

- Equity within staff (Highway Division TMC, DMV)
    - Well-rounded teams have different life experiences and contributions to problem-solving (Highway Division TMC)
- Recognize everyone is a human being that brings something different to table (Asset Management)

DBE Program and Directory

- Use of DBE Program and Directory
    - Yes (Highway Division, Public Transit)
        - Important part of program
    - VAPDA is not aware of using it. Has been used in the past, but have since instituted state bid system, which may take into account DBE program and Directory but not sure (VAPDA)
- Use of DBEs are encouraged but not mandated (Civil Rights)
- Civil Rights Office help DBEs by providing assistance and resources, sending newly advertised projects and RFPs, and recruitment for program (Civil Rights)
- Civil Rights provides subsidy for women/BIPOC drivers to get their own commercial driver licenses

Other Programs

- DMV allows staff to work from home if needed regarding FML purposes (DMV)
- DMV has staff equity – wellness group (DMV)
- Civil Rights required everyone who met requirements and that was female or BIPOC be interviewed. Started a hiring justification process to help with candidates being overlooked (Civil Rights)
- Trainings on DEI concepts (and continually identifying where more training on concepts is needed). Full-day training with transportation leadership institute for deep overview of all civil rights components and programs that Civil Rights Office administers (Civil Rights)
- New American / Bilingual hires have taken the lead for VTrans for language translation (Civil Rights)

Challenges

- Sexism and racism within culture (VAPDA)
- Need education for staff about race (community organization)

- Not sure there has been barriers to establishing policies related to increasing equitable outcomes but communication and knowledge gap to be filled (Asset Management)
- Can't force contractors to fulfill training hires regarding hiring women/BIPOC staff since VTrans is scrambling to spend all the money they've been awarded (Civil Rights)

Requested resources / outcomes

- Ongoing (at least annual) trainings to address sexism, racism, equity (VAPDA)

About the Framework

What the Framework Should Look Like

- Best practices and resources from other states (Highway Division)
- Data (Highway Division OSB, Asset Management)
    - Spatial data - socioeconomic data (Highway Division OSB), mapping of populations and proximity to jobs (Asset Management), spatial Census Bureau data (Civil Rights)
    - Data that gets turned into information (Asset Management)
- Flexibility to framework to apply to both capital projects and ongoing programs/services (Public Transit)
- Clear guidance or checklist (VAPDA, Highway Division)
    - So that people do not have a choice to implement – because there is only so much convincing that can be done (VAPDA)
    - Clear definition, goals, and plan to implement with tangible actions/measures (Highway Division)
- Make equity framework a part of the culture (Highway Division) and constant communication on topic (Asset Management)
    - "Nothing will happen if implementation of a framework becomes a forms and reporting based compliance drill. Success in institutionalizing this means modifying the culture so that equity considerations becomes an organic part of doing business." (Highway Division OSB, Highway Division Ops)
    - Everyone needs to be onboard and understand the new goals, visions, objectives; has to be engrained in culture, everyday conversation, everyday work (Highway Division, Highway Division Project Delivery, Asset Management)
- Dashboard of equity metrics (Public Transit)

Implementing the Framework Internally

- Early coordination and continual collaboration (Highway Division)
- Process for improving framework, as a living document, with feedback from people/community (Highway Division)

- Model that is flexible, accessible, and intentional - DMV providing essential services during COVID is a good example of thinking outside the box (community organization)
- Provide training / Onboard new staff with framework (VAPDA, DMV)
- Dedicated staff (Public Transit, community organization)
    - Equity manager or point person – does not have to be their sole job (Public Transit)
    - Assigned state-level person to work with refugee population, not only regarding transportation (community organization)

What Framework Should Accomplish Externally

- Support for ANR, lead agency for statewide Environmental Justice Program (Civil Rights)
- Having more people of color on VTrans staff (community organization)
- More information and communication (two community organizations)
    - How to get to destinations
    - Safety of public transportation
    - Feedback they are looking for
    - What they do / are doing
    - Community organizations happy to help promote
- Tie personal experience / narratives into equity framework – use to develop common understanding (community organization)
- Improving language access to services and programs (community organization)
    - Sending staff fluent in Spanish to existing community events
- Try to keep identity politics out of it by focusing on socio-economic factors (Highway Division OSB, Highway Division Ops).
- Need to address systemic discrimination/issues, including laws, policies, mindset (community organization)
- Holistic thinking, e.g., personal safety, access, accessibility/ADA, mobility, equity, affordability (two community organizations)
    - Ensuring that everyone feels safe on Public Transit, including travel at night, racial violence, and police encounters (three community organizations)

Not discriminating against people who are not a multi-generation Vermonter (Civil Rights)

APPENDIX F. DESCRIPTIONS OF KEY VERMONT DOCUMENTS

Vermont - Act 55 of the 2021 Legislative Assembly

An act relating to the Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation, Section 41. Transportation Equity Framework; Report states:
The Agency of Transportation, in consultation with the State's 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), shall undertake a comprehensive analysis of the State's existing transportation programs and develop a recommendation on a transportation equity framework through which the annual Transportation Program (*the Agency's Capital Program*), and the Agency's Annual Project Prioritization Process, can be evaluated so as to advance mobility equity, which is a transportation system that increases access to mobility options, reduces air pollution, and enhances economic opportunity for Vermonters in communities that have been underserved by the State's transportation system.

In conducting the analysis required under subsection (a) of this section, the Agency, in coordination with the State's 11 RPCs, shall seek input from individuals who are underserved by the State's current transportation system or who may not have previously been consulted as part of the Agency's planning processes. In order to aid the Agency in conducting the analysis required under subsection (a) of this section, the State's 11 RPCs shall convene regional meetings focused on achieving equity and inclusion in the transportation planning process. Meeting facilitation shall include identification of and outreach to underrepresented local communities and solicitation of input on the transportation planning process pursuant to the transportation planning efforts required under 19 V.S.A. § 10l.

The Agency shall file a written report with its analysis and a recommendation on a transportation equity framework as required under subsection (a) of this section with the House and Senate Committees on Transportation no later than January 15, 2022.

S.148, An Act Related to Environmental Justice in Vermont

The Senate bill S.148 became Act 154 in Vermont Law after being enacted in 2022. The bill is a significant piece of recent legislation pertaining to environmental justice advancing several actions included in this framework.[38] Specifically, the Act authorizes an Advisory Council to be formed to guide ongoing conversations and the periodically revisit key metrics associated with the definition of environmental justice populations. The Act also specifies that a mapping tool be developed to support the definition of environmental justice populations and directs each state agency to develop community engagement plans. Since Act 154 contains a set of processes relevant to this framework, the latter will need to consider and coordinate actions with Act 154 implementation. This

coordination should address the fact that Act 154 is directed at all statewide agencies while this framework is specific to the Agency of Transportation and RPCs.

ENDNOTES

[1] Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles Deaf Visor Card Program https://dmv.vermont.gov/document/deaf-visor-card
[2] Vermont Agency of Transportation Program Plans (https://vtrans.vermont.gov/civil-rights/compliance/titlevi/plans)
[3] Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission ECOS Map Viewer: https://map.ccrpcvt.org/chittendencountyvt/
[4] Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Public Participation Plan and Equity Impact Worksheet. https://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CCRPC_PPP_Equity_Impact_Worksheet.pdf
[5] Vermont TPI Manual and Guidebook, 2018. https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/planning/documents/planning/TPI%20Manual_Final%20v3.pdf
[6] See Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission volunteer stipend policy and enrollment form. https://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CCRPC_PPP_Stipend_Policy_and_AC_Enrollment_Form.pdf
[7] Bennington County Regional Planning Commission Trolley Line Path Scoping Study. http://www.bcrcvt.org/uploads/1/1/1/8/111899771/trolley_3.9.2022-b.pdf
[8] US Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS). https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs
[9] Qing Ren and Bindu Panikkar (2021), Vermont Environmental Disparity Index, University of Vermont. URL for the ArcGIS web map: https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=68a9290bde0c42529460e1b8deee8368
[10] Opportunity Atlas. https://www.opportunityatlas.org/
[11] H + T Index. https://htaindex.cnt.org/about/#methodology
[12] Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen
[13] PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. National Equity Atlas. https://nationalequityatlas.org/
[14] Oregon DOT. I-5 and I-205 Toll Projects: Toll Projects' Equity Framework. Updated December 2020. https://www.oregon.gov/odot/tolling/Documents/Toll_Projects_Equity_Framework_with_AppendixA.pdf
[15] Cohen, S., and Hoffman, A., Pricing Roads, Advancing Equity, Report and toolkit (Oakland, California: TransForm, 2019).
[16] Oregon DOT. I-5 and I-205 Toll Projects: Toll Projects' Equity Framework. Updated December 2020. https://www.oregon.gov/odot/tolling/Documents/Toll_Projects_Equity_Framework_with_AppendixA.pdf
[17] Executive Order 13166 “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency” (signed in August 2000) aims to improve access to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). It also requires agencies to ensure that recipients of funds provide the same meaningful access.
[18] 42 USC § 2000d et seq. and 49 CFR Part 21.
[19] 59 FR 7629.
[20] Full text of MOU: https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-02/documents/ej-mou-2011-08.pdf
[21] On January 27, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order (EO) 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, creating the government-wide Justice40 Initiative. On July 20, 2021, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative (M-21-28), which has guided the Department’s work on Justice40 along with relevant statutory authorities. For more information visit https://www.transportation.gov/equity-Justice40

[22] Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice Initiative (M-21-28). July 20, 2021. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/M-21-28.pdf
[23] US Department of Transportation: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Environmental Justice Reference Guide. April 2015. https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/50875
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[37] VTrans. Transportation Planning Initiative Brief. 2018. https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/planning/documents/TPI%202018.pdf
[38] Vermont Act 154 of 2022. https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/ACTS/ACT154/ACT154%20As%20Enacted.pdf