

## EQUITY WORKING GROUP

### JANUARY MEETING NOTES

**Location:** 421 W Riverside Ave, Suite #500  
**Date:** January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025  
**Time:** 4:15 – 5:15 pm  
**SRTC Staff:** Michael Redlinger, Savannah Hayward, Ben Kloskey, Jason Lien  
**Attendees:** Paul K., Jared A.

Ben and Savannah welcomed the group and gave participants a brief introduction about the meeting agenda.

The group's first agenda item was the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Horizon 2050) Needs Assessment, as presented by SRTC Planning Lead Jason Lien. Jason recapped information on SRTC's long range plan and opened an interactive activity on menti.com for participants to respond to. On Mentimeter, Jason reviewed the various inputs to Horizon 2050, including the Regional Safety Action Plan, Resiliency Plan, and numerous other related planning efforts. Jason reviewed the purpose of the Needs Assessment, which will include a master list of projects that are regional in scope, to be evaluated through the lens of SRTC's Guiding Principles. Jason also reviewed upcoming public engagement related to Horizon 2050, including an 8-question survey and a series of workshops throughout the region.

Jason described the program areas or "buckets" included in the Mentimeter activity: active transportation; maintenance and preservation; new construction; research, analysis, and planning; safety and security; transportation demand management; transit; and system operations. He then invited Equity Working Group participants to "invest" in the program areas and indicate how they would allocate a finite budget. Jason also indicated that a similar activity is included in SRTC's 8-question public survey.

A member asked if the activity refers to all transportation projects or only projects that SRTC is involved in. Jason commented that the projects in SRTC's MTP are typically regional in nature – usually larger projects involving federal money. The member also asked Jason to compare the Equity Working Group responses to our current balance of investments, and Jason directed him to the 8-question survey, which includes that information. Jason also provided examples for some of the different program areas (such as the NSC for new construction or grind and overlay projects for M&P)

Another member asked Savannah about public notice for upcoming public engagement activities and indicated that many local residents may be interested in providing input. Savannah mentioned that we're just beginning to spread the word for our spring events and described contacts who SRTC shares public notice, including libraries, neighborhood councils, and others. Jason closed his presentation with a review of the remaining timeline for Horizon 2050, ultimately leading to a target for final approval in November 2025. A member asked about how the agency reconciles public opinion with planner expertise and other factors when formulating the agency's final plan and recommendations. Jason pointed to the role of our Board of Directors, who make critical decisions for the agency based on both staff recommendations and public feedback.

The next agenda item was the Unified List of Regional Transportation Priorities and Policy Statements, as presented by SRTC Principal Planner David Fletcher. The ULRTP is a strategic tool that is used to communicate regional transportation priorities to legislators for potential funding opportunities. There are two versions – one intended for the federal government, and the other for a state government audience. David described how the ULRTP fits in with SRTC’s other major planning projects – being less long-term in scope than the MTP and yet longer term in scope than the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program). David also described how the Unified List is informed by planning studies that may help identify specific recommendations based on needs identified in the region’s MTP. David reviewed policy statements in the ULRTP, which are included in the first part of the document. Policy statements in the Unified List include statewide policy statements – such as an emphasis on improving safety – legislative priority statements, and additional policy statements. The full list of policy statements is included in the document as linked on the SRTC website. The Unified List outlines critical investments, as prioritized based on seven key evaluative criteria: econ vitality, cooperation and leadership, stewardship, operations MP, safety security, quality of life, and equity.

David focused on the equity section, highlighting the four questions that account for that criteria section. Questions highlight the impact on areas of potential disadvantage and areas with environmental health disparities; public outreach and engagement with affected communities; the nexus of safety and equity, addressing safety concerns and working towards STA safety targets; and provision of access or transit frequency between potentially disadvantaged communities and the region’s important activity centers where jobs and services are located. He also described the annual process of reviewing and improving our criteria based on feedback and need. A member asked about the role of public engagement and David mentioned that public engagement is also a key theme in the “cooperation and leadership” criteria area when scoring applications for the list. Another member asked about the last criteria area – which refers to the connections between disadvantaged areas and activity centers. Michael Redlinger commented on the scoring of that particular question and noted that any project that improves known routes between activity centers and targeted communities could score points on that criteria area. David Fletcher also mentioned that key parallel routes that may provide or improve those connections are also eligible for points in that section.

Next on the agenda, David discussed SRTC’s citizens advisory committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). David reviewed SRTC’s organizational chart and his role as staff liaison to the TAC throughout 2024 and 2025. The TAC is made of community members – intended to provide guidance to agency staff, SRTC’s technical advisory committee (TTC) and the Board of Directors. One of the group’s members asked about the TAC’s role in scoring project applications and Michael and Jason described the TAC’s role in scoring project applications, including the recent WSDOT Consolidated Grant Program applications. The member commented on the importance of the TAC in that role and the opportunity to citizen input in that area.

Ben reiterated SRTC’s participation in upcoming community events and provided a preview of the Equity Working Group’s agenda items for March 2025. Savannah then provided a preview and sneak peak to SRTC’s updated brand and website, to be launched on February 25, 2025. She presented the new logo and color scheme as decided by the Board in September 2024, describing the elements of the logo and their symbolic significance to the region. Savannah mentioned that we will have SRTC memorabilia with the new branding available for EWG members who come in person to the next meeting in March 2025. A

member commented on the importance of the image on the website homepage as a “gateway” to other information on the website.

Lastly, Michael made a statement on rapid developments at the federal level and their potential impacts on planning:

As many of you may be aware, at the Federal level there has recently been substantial activity. We’re closely monitoring recent Executive Orders and Federal developments, but there is still uncertainty about how they will impact our work. At this point, the SRTC Board has not yet met, and we have not received any formal direction. While potential changes are being proposed, we don’t have definitive answers. That said, we want to hear from you and your communities— what are your concerns, and how can we support you? While you think on that, please keep in mind that we operate as both a Federal planning agency (MPO) and State planning agency (RTPO), and at the state level, nothing has changed.

The group discussed the recent developments and surrounding uncertainty regarding the distribution of government dollars for transportation. In addition to Michael’s comment, Jason emphasized the novel elements of the current situation and uncertainty facing planners around the state in numerous organizations. He mentioned that this is new territory for SRTC, our members and community partners. A group member questioned the lack of precedent for recent developments and expressed doubt that a president can strike down federal laws without first passing through a proper judicial or legislative process – and commented on ongoing legal challenges that may impact how the current situation develops.