SPOKANE REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

EQUITY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Adopted by the SRTC Board of Directors 12.08.2022

Equity Statement

The Spokane Regional Transportation Council's (SRTC's) mission is to ensure that all Spokane County residents have access to safe and reliable transportation options that support economic opportunity and quality of life regardless of a person's economic, social, ethnic, race, age, sexual orientation, physical, mental, or geographic circumstances. SRTC is committed to equitable delivery of its programs and services – and to pursuing equitable outcomes in the Greater Spokane community.

Equity is defined as action to promote fairness of opportunity for all people. This means removing barriers in day-to-day decisions, existing practices, and laws that deny everyone from fully participating in society.[1] The full Washington State definition of equity can be found within the State Office of Financial Management's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary.[2]

Race Equity is defined as the vision or existence of a community, society, or world in which race or color does not predict the amount and quality of opportunities, services, and benefits.[2]

Equity in transportation seeks fairness in mobility and accessibility to meet the needs of all community members. A central goal of transportation is to facilitate social and economic opportunities by providing equitable levels of access to affordable and reliable transportation options based on the needs of the populations being served, particularly populations that are traditionally underserved.[3]

Equity gives all people a fair and just shot in life despite historic patterns of racial and economic exclusion. The ideal outcome of this work would be that transportation system burdens and benefits, as well as opportunities for all people, are no longer predictable by race or other identifiers.

What is the Equity Planning Framework?

The proposed equity planning framework includes the primary themes and recommendations which emerged from the 2022 equity planning work group and framework development process. The document has also incorporated additional feedback from SRTC's Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), and Board of Directors.

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[1] Washington State Department of Transportation, "Open Your Equity Lens", accessed October 14, 2022, https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/Equity-Lens.pdf

[2] Washington State Office of Financial Management, "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – Glossary of Equity - Washington," accessed October 14, 2022, https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEIGlossaryofEquityRelatedTerms.pdf.

[3] The Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program, "What Is Equity in Transportation," Transportation Equity - Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program (United States Department of Transportation), accessed October 14, 2022, https://www.planning.dot.gov/planning/topic_transportationequity.aspx

We can only maximize our success as a region when we fully address existing inequities and demonstrate positive outcomes. In order to drive positive transformative actions in our community as they relate to transportation, the equity planning work group proposed SRTC commitment to pursuing the recommendations listed and described in this document. Through this effort, SRTC will advance its core values - Regional Leadership, Collaboration, Accountability, Innovation, Transparency, Inclusiveness, and Integrity.

All items are recommendations, for which a secondary implementation process may be required.

Development

The equity planning work group was assembled from members of SRTC's Transportation Technical Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee, and Board of Directors between January and February 2022. Additional participants from SRTC's member jurisdictions and agencies were also welcomed on a voluntary basis. Not all work group members were present for every meeting, but a detailed overview and recording of each meeting was provided to those who were unable to attend.

The work group met eight times – monthly between March and October – to discuss equitable transportation planning in Spokane County, propose potential tools and strategies, and prioritize top recommendations. The work group also reviewed materials from other agencies, heard from guest speakers from other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and heard guest speakers from two of Spokane's historically overburdened neighborhoods. Each meeting was at least an hour in duration.

Board and Committee members on the equity planning work group:

> Colin Quin-Hurst, City of Spokane, TTC
>
> Cindy Green, Spokane Regional health District, TTC
>
> Char Kay, Washington State Department of Transportation, TTC
>
> Mike Tressider, Spokane Transit Authority, TTC
>
> Kelly Fukai, Washington State Transportation Commission, SRTC Board of Directors
>
> Kim Zentz, Urbanova, TAC
>
> Raychel Callary, Lilac Services for the Blind, TAC
>
> Bill White, T-O Engineers, TAC
>
> Rhonda Young, Gonzaga University, TAC

Other equity planning work group members:

Paul Kropp, Spokane Plan Commission Transportation Subcommittee

SRTC Staff Participants:

Michael Redlinger, Associate Transportation Planner II

Kylee Jones, Associate Transportation Planner III

Eve McMenamy, Deputy Executive Director

Equity Planning Themes

Through this work, five important themes emerged which we utilized to help organize our recommendations. The five themes are:

Engagement Processes

Increasing Access to Opportunities

Sustainability, Health, and Safety

Equity Spending and Project Prioritization

Performance Evaluation Metrics

Recommendations

The following list includes the top recommendations by theme. Items are not in any particular order, and some items may appear under more than one theme. Symbols as illustrated below indicate the estimated staff requirements, costs, timeframe, and requirements for member agencies.

Staff Resources and Costs:

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In terms of staff personnel and time as well as additional cost to the agency.

Member Agency Activities:

✔

Will action be required of member agencies or committee members?

Estimated Timeframe:

Short (2023-2024)
Mid (-2025)
Long (-2026 or beyond)

Engagement Processes

- **Recommendation:** Establish an equity work group or advisory group as a continuing activity. This would require Board action to establish the work group, including its composition and responsibilities. The group could include members of the TAC and/or TTC, Board, and community representatives. The group could complement and support external SRTC outreach to EJ communities/service providers.

  $ $ $ ✔ **Short**
  - **Purpose and benefit:** If established, an equity advisory group could help SRTC by serving two (or three) key functions.
    - Advise the agency on criteria and targets for project-level assessment.
    - Review projects and programs to determine which projects have been effective in their stated goals vs. those that have been less impactful.
    - Ensure equity remains a living, evolving topic in SRTC's planning process.

- **Recommendation:** Support project sponsors to report the level of engagement during project planning and outreach. Support projects with greater community support. Define what qualifies as meaningful engagement.

  $ $ ✔ Short
  - **Purpose and benefit:** Ensure that all communities' voices are heard and that projects that truly benefit local communities rise to the top when it comes to equity. Improve SRTC's understanding of who we (and our members) are reaching and who we are not so that we can prioritize projects that benefit our most impacted communities.

- **Recommendation:** Add an equity statement into SRTC's Public Participation Plan as an update.

  $ Short
  - **Purpose and benefit:** An equity statement included in our Public Participation Plan would make SRTC's emphasis clear to both the public and our stakeholders. It would build on work done during the last PPP update and indicate the important place of equity within our public engagement protocols.

- **Recommendation:** Regular staff-level training for SRTC staff and SRTC members. This could be coordinated by SRTC staff, or through a common third-party resource (such as WSDOT). Important topics include: What does meaningful engagement look like? What does SRTC mean by equity? Though this would include equitable engagement, training and education should also go beyond engagement and include how SRTC functions as an equitable organization.

  $ $ $ ✔ Short
  - **Purpose and benefit:** SRTC staff and member agencies should understand how we analyze equity to maximize meaningful participation in agency activities. Member agencies should have a common understanding of what meaningful engagement means to the agency and what that practically looks like within the transportation planning process.

- **Recommendation:** Consider an SRTC policy (or Public Participation Plan update) to standardize compensation and incentives for public input in targeted outreach situations. This would include research on the most effective way(s) to utilize incentives as well as policy compliance with the federal and state government.

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$ $ $ **Mid**

- o **Purpose and benefit:** A single policy would help organize our protocols for incentives, organizing, and hiring consultants - as well as provide guidance for when incentives may bolster the effectiveness of targeted outreach efforts.

Increasing Access to Opportunities

- **Recommendation:** An equity planning assessment for projects (such as WSDOT's forthcoming environmental justice assessment tool or the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research's Transportation Equity Toolkit). Once equity is included among SRTC's guiding principles, criteria and targets could be set by the SRTC Board with the input of SRTC's committees and staff.

  $ $ $ $ ✔ **Short**

  - o **Purpose and benefit:** An equity assessment for projects would:
    - ▪ Help provide a backbone for equity project scoring for multiple planning efforts.
    - ▪ Position SRTC to review and potentially adopt the environmental justice assessment set by the state of Washington as part of the HEAL Act implementation process. That assessment tool, once completed (no later than 7/1/23), will be applied at the state level to all projects and programs (≥ $15 million) receiving state dollars.

- **Recommendation:** Make use of origin/destination data – such as connectivity and access between EJ area origins and key destinations. This process could be utilized to help identify areas where projects may be impactful, as well as to help review project impact. As an initial step, SRTC would need to identify an effective origin/destination data source, acquire data, and establish a methodology for analysis. The data would be kept up to date through regular updates or acquisitions of new data.

  $ $ $ $ **Mid**

  - o **Purpose and benefit:** Help identify barriers to access as well as potential projects that are likely to improve connectivity. Provide SRTC additional tools to look at built projects and their impact on the flow of people.

Sustainability, Health, and Safety

- **Recommendation:** Improve SRTC Safe & Complete Street Policy by identifying potential areas to improve transportation equity.

  $ $ ✔ Short
  - **Purpose and benefit:** Help SRTC improve the overall equity of the region's transportation system by identifying additional areas to improve safe and complete streets and/or additional projects that should be included under the safe & complete streets policy.

- **Recommendation:** Work on ensuring that design elements are implemented and built. The equity work group heard from neighborhood councils that there is sometimes a gap between the final design of projects and the expected design elements the community recommended. Work with jurisdictions to ensure communication with the community and that project designs meet community needs.

  $ $ $ ✔ Long
  - **Purpose and benefit:** Improve communication so that the community is involved and fully informed when expectations evolve throughout stages of project development. At the MPO level, this may include additional emphasis on regular and meaningful engagement by project sponsors with community members.

Equity Spending and Project Prioritization

- **Recommendation:** Equity should be included in the guiding principles. This would ensure equity is used as performance measure for major projects (such as the MTP, TIP, and Unified List) and allow the Board to set targets. The SRTC Board and staff will work with local agencies on the setting of targets. It is the working group's recommendation that equity be considered an agency value throughout programs and activities.

  $ $ ✔ Short
  - **Purpose and benefit:** Equity as a guiding principle would help frame future activities and standardize transportation equity assessment among project evaluation criteria for the agency's major planning and project prioritization efforts. This would ensure that equity remains important to how we function at all levels as an organization.

- **Recommendation:** An equity planning assessment for projects (such as WSDOT's forthcoming environmental justice assessment tool or the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research's Transportation Equity Toolkit). Once equity is included among SRTC's guiding principles, criteria and targets could be set by the SRTC Board with the input of SRTC's committees and staff.

  $ $ $ $ ✔ Short
  - o **Purpose and benefit:** An equity assessment for projects would:
    - ▪ Help provide a backbone for equity project scoring for multiple planning efforts.
    - ▪ Position SRTC to review and potentially adopt the environmental justice assessment set by the state of Washington as part of the HEAL Act implementation process. That assessment tool, once completed (no later than 7/1/23), will be applied at the state level to all projects and programs (≥ $15 million) receiving state dollars.

- **Recommendation:** Track (year over year) investment levels likely to be used by / targeted towards EJ communities. It is important that SRTC begins to track its investments in transportation equity. SRTC is obligated to ensure that the benefits of the transportation system are distributed fairly with regard to historically excluded and disadvantaged communities. Data would be maintained regularly to ensure accuracy and efficacy.

  $ $ Mid
  - o **Purpose and benefit:** This would grant the agency increased awareness of potential needs as well as investment gaps and inequities. A better understanding of where SRTC dollars go (and where dollars have gone) would improve performance management and better position the agency to get ahead of discussions at the state (and federal) level.

Performance Evaluation Metrics

- **Recommendation:** Establish an equity work group or advisory group as a continuing activity. This would require Board action to establish the work group, including its composition and responsibilities. The group could include members of the TAC and/or

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TTC, Board, and community representatives. The group could complement and support external SRTC outreach to EJ communities/service providers.

$ $ $ ✔ **Short**

- o **Purpose and benefit:** If established, an equity advisory group could help SRTC by serving two (or three) key functions.
    - Advise the agency on criteria and targets for project-level assessment.
    - Review projects and programs to determine which projects have been effective in their stated goals vs. those that have been less impactful.
    - Ensure equity remains a living, evolving topic in SRTC's planning process.

- **Recommendation:** Consider including equity in our annual Performance Management Framework (federally mandated measures). The tracking of investments over time and the forementioned equity work group or advisory group could play a role in pursuing this recommendation.
- **$ $** **Mid**
    - o **Purpose and benefit:** Ensure that we're setting effective goals, that we're successful on the goals we set forth, and that we continue making progress towards equitable transportation outcomes.

- **Recommendation:** Make use of origin/destination data – such as connectivity and access between EJ area origins and key destinations. This process could be utilized to help identify areas where projects may be impactful, as well as to help review project impact. As an initial step, SRTC would need to identify an effective origin/destination data source, acquire data, and establish a methodology for analysis. The data would be kept up to date through regular updates or acquisitions of new data.

$ $ $ $ **Mid**

- o **Purpose and benefit:** Help identify barriers to access as well as potential projects that are likely to improve connectivity. Provide SRTC additional tools to look at built projects and their impact on the flow of people.

Additional Tools and Strategies

In addition to the top recommendations, many tools and strategies were discussed by the working group. Many of these items may be addressed within the top recommendations but appear here in a slightly different form. These items were:

Incorporate equity into SRTC mission, vision, and values.

Measure closure of observed gaps (access and demographic data). Identify gaps, measure whether gap is addressed and how well.

Create or adopt a scorecard to track the performance of the entire transportation system. (To evaluate comparative performance of transp. system in EJ areas)

Create (and leverage existing) survey data with location. (Board can make targets)

Ensure projects have received local community support. (Must be demonstrated)

Add an equity statement to the 'About SRTC' web page.

Draft internal policy on utilization of engagement strategy template tool.

Draft high-level strategic goal to increase access to opportunity for disadvantaged communities.

Track percent of investments going to active transportation - use EJ community data

Place additional focus on identifying existing gaps.

Draft additional questions or review process for projects that may impact areas of potential disadvantage.

Differentiate equity performance measures by project type.

Create more opportunities for targeted public involvement/public feedback data.

Look at changes in adjacent property value when evaluating projects and project areas.

Formalize translation policy and apply to major planning/mapping products.

Expand availability of non-English translations of important SRTC documents (and/or maps)

Integrate equity into administrative processes/internal operations (hiring, training, management)

Host regular public workshops or meetings about equity with EJ group representative groups and service providers.

Generate public-facing videos or education series.

Create/ maintain interactive public comment map (or other interactive web tools).

Create system to share feedback from outreach efforts between agency partners/committees. (and vice versa)

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Leverage available bike/ped counter data in reviewing projects

Look for opportunities to install additional bike/ped counters for data collection

Place additional priority on projects where the features of project are in compliance with safe & complete streets process

Look to additional scenario modeling for reviewing specific groups of projects.

Incorporate additional GIS-based analysis.

Invest in access to Urban Footprint or similar service. Start by identifying communities vulnerable to different scenarios.

Study or needs analysis to help Identify benefits and negative impacts.

Define EJ economic justice areas

Include access to transit in EJ areas to project scoring