



2050 Transportation Policy Plan

Equity Engagement Preliminary Themes



Equity Engagement Approach



In-Depth Listening

- One-on-one and small group interviews (28 people)
 - Questions:
 - Personal priorities;
 - Reactions to 2040 goals
 - Thoughts on DRAFT 2050 vision
- Two listening sessions
 - Broad representation from all constituencies
 - Two questions:
 - Reactions to 2040 goals
 - Thoughts on DRAFT 2050 vision
- Survey (n = 18)
 - Available to people unable to attend a session
 - Shared with staff, lists of some listening session attendees

Who We Heard From

Category	Interviews	Feedback Sessions	Online Survey
Equity - Focused Groups	5 Interviews (+5)	4 Attendees	-
Climate-Friendly Transportation Groups	3 Interviews (+3)	3 Attendees	-
Aging, Disability and Social Service Groups	5 Interviews	5 Attendees	-
Business Groups and Associations	2 Interviews (+1)	5 Attendees	-
Corridor Coalitions and Specialty Projects	3 Interviews	3 Attendees	-
Water and Land Use Groups	N/A	8 Attendees	-
Neighborhood-level Organizations	1 Interview	2 Attendees	-
TOTAL	28	30	17

What have we heard?



A Note:

We will be reviewing high-level themes during the meeting, but additional content is included for your review and follow-up

Theme 1: Equity Is A Top Priority

Equity is a top priority for many, but it needs to be more clearly defined.

- Equity was consistently the topic of greatest interest to most respondents.
- Consistent top priority: Met Council's definition of equity.
- Repair from past transportation harms (e.g. Rondo), attention to environmental justice is a point of interest for many.
- Metro Transit policies are most-cited reference point for how Met Council approaches equity
 - Allowing suburbs to opt-out of Metro Transit is seen as inequitable
 - One person pointed to a new bus line connecting Phillips and North Minneapolis neighborhoods as an example of transit connecting under-resourced neighborhoods, but not connecting neighborhoods to resources

Theme 1: Equity Is A Top Priority (2)

"What are we actually trying to accomplish here? Are we talking about all kinds of equity across race, gender, and disability and income and what not? Are we are trying to highlight certain priorities? Are we trying to right past wrongs...? Or are we solely forward looking?" – Climate-friendly transportation advocate

"[Equity] is very important, this would be the top for me. ... You don't have anything if you don't have this."

"When we think about the jobs, transportation, housing mismatch, I think the Met Council contributes to that because it has allowed communities where the lion's share of growth in, in family sustaining wages without a degree required, where they're located, so you think like Shakopee, Eagan, Savage, outer ring suburbs that provide park and ride options only for downtown employees. Anybody else is required, essentially, to have a car to get to or around those communities. And that's something that is permitted in state statute, like they were allowed to opt out of the transportation aspect of met Council's authority. I think that that is flies directly in the face of equity." – Corridor coalition

Theme 2: Safety

Most community members view safety as transit, rather than modes

- Respondents most-emphasized personal safety and behaviors on / around light rail and buses, only 3 mentioned bicycle, pedestrian or vehicle safety.
 - The interplay of race and enforcement was acknowledged as a challenging dynamic by many.
- Older adults, people with disabilities highlighted safety as important to those who feel physically vulnerable, generally.
 - Others talked about details like ensuring people are seated before moving a bus as an example of safety that is important to older adults and people with disabilities.
- Native American leaders interviewed highlighted the importance of Hiawatha Ave. and Lake Street transit for their community.
 - Blue Line stops at Lake Street and Franklin Avenue are seen as key connectors for the community.
 - Suburban Native Leaders are concerned by the time it takes to travel from South Minneapolis to exurbs via transit
- Respondents report that many people who depend on transit also fear it

Theme 2: Safety (2)

"I need to know more what [safety] means in practice, because if we're talking about safety in terms of people biking, about people's physical safety, the lack of accidents, absolutely [safety is a priority]. But if we're talking about the traditional generally police-focused responses to safety issues, then I would have a very different answer."

"I think that unpacking that concept of safety is very important... safety and perceptions of safety are important points."

"I think often people think about safety and policing or safety and crime. But often you would get a lot of people especially, you know, folks in the 50+ age group, folks with disabilities, talking about like the safety of the physical. 'I don't want to slip and fall,' or 'There's no lights here,' or 'I have arthritis, and this is so painful for me to be at this cold bus stop.'"

"A lot of times safety is framed up as 'homeless people sleeping on the trains make me feel unsafe.' But in fact, those homeless people also feel unsafe, so it's really about safety for everybody."

Theme 3: System Maintenance

A tension exists between investing in the existing system vs. transforming the system for the future.

- Respondents see value in caring for existing roads
 - Pothole repair is of particular interest
 - Some respondents pointed to the damage potholes can do to older cars, more likely to impact people of fewer means
- Still, many caution against putting too much emphasis on caring for the current system.
 - Climate change is seen as requiring a different system
 - Strategic choices about where to care for existing and where to build for the future are needed

Theme 3: System Maintenance (2)

"Maintenance of the [current transportation] system is critical to us because those are the main ways that both the people that work here and our customers come to us from the Twin Cities."

"We want to build a new system, not maintain the existing system. It's not at all important to maintain the existing system."

"I think that the current system is important, but insufficient. So I think that over-emphasizing just maintaining the roads and maintaining the mass transit system, that it kind of loses the bigger picture..."

"I think that kind of inherent in that goal is maintaining the system that we have, and I don't think the system that we have is serving a lot of people."

Theme 4: Elevate Climate Change

Community members appreciate naming climate – and hope to see Met Council go further.

Sustainability language of 2040 goals is not seen as going far enough in addressing urgent climate needs

Most appreciate seeing Climate Change highlighted in regional vision

- Some would like to see Met Council go further in setting concrete goals for climate impact
- Few offered specific ideas of transportation goals that could support the regional vision, but all intuitively believe transportation will play an important role in Met Council successfully leading on Climate Change

Theme 4: Elevate Climate Change (2)

"A very important one big absence [in the 2040 goals] is there's no mention of climate, which I think I would even say zero emissions.... And what else is there other than meeting those goals?"

"Well, one very glaring thing that's missing [in the 2040 goals] is an explicit mention of climate change. I do not think sustainability, broadly mentioned is direct enough. And the Council is responsible for many, many, many of the levers that drive climate change in the state of Minnesota. I think that that should be really explicit."

"I like the fact that [this vision is] calling on climate because they didn't in the [2040] goals..."

Theme 4: Elevate Climate Change (3)

Community members appreciate naming climate – and hope to see Met Council go further

"I don't know what it means to 'lead' on addressing climate change. If everyone else is doing sort of poorly, and we're doing ok, are we leading? Technically yes. But I don't think we want to just be ok. We want to be taking the important steps that we need to take."



Theme 5: A Multi-Node Future

Many imagine a future of many nodes across the region, rather than the current suburbs-to-downtown transportation design.

Respondents imagine a future where transportation and transit better connects where and how people live and work, equitably.

- Some refer to a “15-minute city,” others refer to “multi-node” communities.
- Almost all talk about the hub-and-spoke model of transportation and transit funneling into and out of downtowns as less relevant today.
- Even more look to an aging future and commitment to equity as signaling an even greater need for dispersed transit access.

Theme 5: A Multi-Node Future (2)

"It's important to keep everybody connected and as long as our transit system and our multimodal systems are relatively hub and spoke, they're not going to keep up with the current demographic shifts." -- Social service organization

"I do think greater emphasis on transportation nodes, equitable transportation nodes, things that allow people to not have to travel beyond a geographic space to be employed or to be a part of employment."

"Even if you live in Eden Prairie, to take the transit system takes you two hours to get to Shakopee just because of how it's laid out right now." – Native American community leader

"When I think about the Phillips neighborhood, if I live in Phillips and I work is at Southdale, I have to take two buses. But southwest Minneapolis had, at the time that we studied it [in grad school], at least 10 routes that serve southwest Minneapolis. And they had the lowest transit ridership." – Corridor coalition

Theme 5: A Multi-Node Future (3)



“The D Line that connects Chicago Avenue and South Minneapolis, up through downtown Minneapolis, up into North Minneapolis...that's good. But also, that line is just like, connecting a whole bunch of underserved communities throughout the city. It's not connecting any of those communities to communities with significantly more opportunity.”

“Because just like connecting poor neighborhoods to poor neighborhoods, and like, I mean, everybody needs access. But if we want to have an actual, you know, upward mobility ladder, and that's city, state, region, country, whatever, we're gonna have to not just connect people in the Phillips neighborhood, to opportunities in North Minneapolis, but we're going to have to get them to opportunities on the University campus and like Lowry Hill area, wherever...”

-Climate-friendly transportation advocate

Ideas + Themes Beyond The Questions

- Accountability + measurement
- Don't forget the economy
- Uncertainty post-pandemic
- Housing + transportation connections
- The opportunity of federal resources
- Understanding Met Council's role



Theme 6: Accountability + Measurement

Community stakeholders want to see accountability, measurement, and action on goals.

- Respondents expressed confusion about what Met Council is accountable for.
- In equal measure, most respondents want to see clear benchmarks for making progress on Met Council's goals, especially around equity and climate change.
 - The definition of equity is seen as essential to setting measures of progress on achieving equity.

Theme 6: Accountability + Measurement (2)

- *"[The 2040 goals are] good as policy or strategic directions, but I'm not sure how we're actualizing them."*
- *"With Met Council, the words on the page are almost always helpful, and the implementation is almost always weak."*
- *"I want these goals to be taken seriously, and I want there to be a real implementation plan for them, and that is going to be really politically tough... We have been building a system that is not climate sustainable, and not very equitable, for like 75 years.... We're going to have to change how we do things. And **no one alive right now remembers a time when we weren't on the trajectory that we're on.**"*

Theme 7: Don't Forget Economy

Some noted absence of the economy from 2050 vision

Some respondents noted the absence of economy from the draft 2050 Regional Vision

The attention to economy in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan was appreciated by these respondents

- Not everyone noted the absence of economy, but those that did felt strongly

Theme 7: Don't Forget Economy (2)

"There's nothing in the vision statement about jobs, the economy, or income. And this is huge, and really, I think reveals a disconnect between the main way all of those other aims are achieved. There is no equity, there is no justice, there is no environmental quality, no quality of life unless people have really good jobs. And it's missing from this whole frame."

"I think it's important how 'economic competitiveness and prosperity' is defined, because I think that can be used to justify a wide variety of infrastructure, strategy, and also prosperity for whom?"

"It says, 'Depends on the strength and inclusiveness of our economy, as well as the quality safety and reliability of our public and infrastructure and services,' and I don't know that that explicitly includes the businesses. It talks about the inclusiveness of our economy, but it doesn't necessarily talk about how do we plan and support the existence of key businesses in all areas."

"When I think about transportation planning, I think a lot about activating and opening up areas of our region that that will then create the economic growth opportunities" – Business leader

Theme 8: Uncertainty Post-Pandemic

Respondents appreciate the unique moment

- Across all perspectives, community members and leaders recognize that the Twin Cities is in a unique and uncertain place
- Business respondents talked about the uncertainty faced:
 - Supply chain shortages,
 - Worker shortages
 - The move to hybrid or remote work
- Equity advocates highlighted the important moment of the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd as a watershed moment in how people understand and think about equity.
- Climate-friendly transportation advocates and corridor coalitions highlighted the precarious position of transit.

Theme 8: Uncertainty Post-Pandemic (2)

“There's certainly no playbook right now. I mean, post COVID, we all thought that we would get through the pandemic, we'd flip the calendar and things would go back to the way they were. And that's clearly not the case...We're dealing with a whole different set of issues now than we were back in 2019.” – Business

“[A new model] would take a total rework of how we look at transit, in the metro. We saw some of this play out during the pandemic, where nobody wanted to go downtown anymore. Nobody needed to go downtown anymore.” – Social service and disability organizations.

“Well, you know, I think a lot of it is, there's so much uncertainty that we can't make a plan, right? And so if we don't know what's happening in the next five years on highway 65, how can we talk about what we want in 25 years or 10 years or whatever?” – Business

“The pandemic is something that you can't really disentangle from that we know ridership is down, and that service is being cut. And that's kind of led transit into a bit of a death spiral.” – Climate-friendly transportation advocate

Theme 9: Housing + Transportation Connections

People interviewed appreciate the link on many levels

Business leaders highlighted the importance of transportation for seeding housing and business development. They see transportation and transit planning as essential to spurring housing at all price-points.

Older adult and disability advocates talked about the tight connection between transit routes and housing choice for those who depend on transit and Metro Mobility. Some shared fear that reduced routes could force them to search for more expensive housing.

Social service respondents highlighted the precarious nature of homelessness, especially for those without a car.

- Transit dependence can force trade-offs between being on-time for work and being in line with time to secure a bed.

Theme 9: Housing + Transportation Connections (2)

- *“We're exceeding our goals when it comes to **market rate housing**, which no one wanted to talk about, like, no we should talk about that, we're exceeding our goals. And then no one thought in this process to bring up the transit system...the total percentage that was in the highest volume transit corridors.... **Transportation's helping solve housing**... But I don't ever hear the housing folks talking about transit, or really vice versa ” -- Business leader*
- *“One of the biggest impediments in Scott County is the cost of living and the **lack of affordable housing**.” -- Native American community leader*
- *“When I think about the folks that were living in a homeless shelter, whether or not they have access to a bed when beds are already at a limited supply [is a big deal]...**If they're working, trying to get themselves out of homelessness, they may get back [into homelessness] because transit doesn't support their commute.** They may get back late and either not have a bed or take like sleeping in a place that isn't conducive to them being well rested. And they're oftentimes doing physical labor, so you've got folks who are showing up for work, maybe not showing up for work or showing up for work late, that challenges their ability to earn a wage. Or if they show up, they're tired, because they haven't had a good night's rest, because transit that gets them to work doesn't get them back in time for them to like secure a bed and or a good night's rest.” – Social service organization*

Theme 10: Opportunity of Federal Investment

Several observed that American Rescue Plan Act and IIJA present opportunities for new types of investment

- Some respondents see federal investments as a way to approach transportation and transit differently
 - Business leaders mentioned the importance of rethinking work and transportation planning to locate jobs
 - Equity advocates talked about the opportunity to advance anti-displacement efforts and invest in repair for communities harmed by past transportation investments
 - Climate-friendly transportation advocates

Theme 10: Opportunity of Federal Investment (2)

- *“We're in this moment, right now with a lot of big federal funding opportunities that I'm sure you're aware of, you know, the infrastructure bill, the inflation Reduction Act, the CHIPS act, some of the American Rescue Plan Act, like some of these really big pots of dollars that are creating a moment across the country, for regions specifically to be thinking about how they want to grow, you know? What's the new economy? What's the next economy? What are the industries that are going to drive the next economy for your region?” – Business leader*
- *“We are also between like the, you know, IIJA and IRA dollars and like impending climate crisis, needing to electrify our transportation system, both in terms of city and county fleets, how we move goods, but also personal vehicles.” – Equity advocate*
- *“Met Council doesn't, as far as I can tell, try to incentivize the behaviors they would like to see out of local units of government. We're seeing the federal government is finally starting to do that. By trying to incentivize behavior by states. Well, the Met Council can do that visa vie individual cities..” – Corridor coalition*

Analysis: Met Council's Role

Across interviews.....

- We asked about transportation; received comments about transit.
- Very few people interviewed knew what the Regional Solicitation is or that Met Council plays an important role in city and county road projects.
- Most people appreciate that Met Council is large and influential but struggled to give feedback on how to use that influence – even among people steeped in policy day-to-day. This points to a general lack of clarity around Met Council's role and opportunities.
- Few people know the minutia of how roads are built, but everyone interviewed and in listening sessions appreciates the consequential nature of transportation choices for impacting the things they care about.
 - This holds true whether its jobs and economic opportunity, climate change, equity or environmental justice.