

2050 Transportation Policy Plan: Policy + Actions Equity-Engagement Themes

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Introduction

The Metropolitan Council (“Met Council”) plays a unique and critical role in the Twin Cities by guiding the strategic growth of the seven-county metro region across areas of regional planning, transit, transportation planning, environmental services and more.

The Met Council’s regional plan is crafted every 10 years to guide development and planning across the region’s cities and counties. The Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) is one of several sub-plans that guides transportation funding and policy, specifically. The 2050 TPP is the focus of this report. Among consequential features, the TPP establishes the goals and objectives that will anchor the Regional Solicitation, local comprehensive plans, and key studies that will build the base of transportation knowledge for the next decade.

SDK has been engaged by the Met Council in two phases of the TPP development. First, SDK conducted interviews, listening sessions and a survey to provide input on the Goals + Objectives of the 2050 TPP. This work was conducted in early 2023.

More recently, SDK has conducted additional engagement of diverse perspectives to invite feedback on the Policies + Actions that the Met Council will use to put the TPP Goals and Objectives into practice. This second round of engagement included follow up interviews and listening sessions with stakeholders reached in the first round of engagement. In addition, SDK has partnered with RSG to bring African American, African Immigrant and Latinx respondents into the Transportation Behavior Inventory (TBI). Summary data from the TBI surveys facilitated by SDK and input from the equity cohort of community partners who helped administer surveys at their events is also incorporated to add a dimension of real-world experience to this discussion of transportation policies and priorities.

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Scope + Methods

The Met Council engaged SDK to lead engagement with diverse community stakeholders on the proposed Policies and Actions that will be used to implement the TPP in pursuit of its five goal areas:

- Our region is equitable and inclusive
- We protect and restore natural systems
- We lead on addressing climate change
- Our communities are healthy and safe
- Our region is dynamic and resilient

These goals and supporting objectives were approved by the Met Council in 2023. All proposed Policies and Actions are designed to make progress on at least one of these. The Policies and Actions are designed to move through Met Council's core levers of influence: The Regional Solicitation (the Met Council's grant program that evaluates and distributes federal funding for transportation projects across the region); local comprehensive plan guidance; to share knowledge across agencies on emerging issues; and studies to build new knowledge-based on emerging topic areas in transportation.

The Met Council's scope and areas of influence in regional transportation are substantial, but also complex. For this engagement, SDK focused efforts on engaging with many of the same stakeholders and leaders consulted on TPP Goals and Objectives, providing an opportunity for groups to dig deeper in specific actions to implement the goals. As with previous TPP engagement, SDK interviews reached people from policy-level organizations or service providers (social services, libraries) with a broad view of transportation's impact on people's lives. This approach helps ensure that those providing feedback bring a base understanding of policy drafting that can enable them to give clear input, but also bring diverse transportation user perspectives to the TPP. SDK's work included in-depth interviews with key community leaders, listening sessions with stakeholder groups, and consultation with equity-focused leaders. SDK conducted this work largely in December 2023 and January 2024.

Perspectives Engaged

In consultation with the Met Council, SDK invited input from a cross-section of people and perspectives who bring different lenses and interests to the Transportation Policy Plan conversation. Stakeholder perspectives engaged include:

- Equity-focused leaders
- Climate-friendly transportation groups
- Aging, disability, and social service groups
- Business associations and neighborhood-level organizations
- Corridor coalitions and specialty projects
- Water and land use groups

The following table details participation by method and stakeholder group.

Category	Interviews	Listening Sessions
Equity-focused Leaders	5 Interviews (+ 10)	6 Attendees
Climate-Friendly Transportation Groups	2 Interviews (+4)	1 Attendee
Aging, Disability, and Social Service Groups	2 Interviews	5 Attendees
Business Associations, Neighborhood-Level Organizations	2 Interview	7 Attendees
Corridor Coalitions and Specialty Projects	1 Interview	2 Attendees
Water and Land Use Groups	N/A	14 Attendees
TOTAL	24 Interviews	35 Attendees

Methods + Questions

SDK utilized three engagement methods to provide multiple venues for in-depth listening: one-on-one and small group interviews, listening sessions, and a focus group with Equity Cohort organizations who partnered with SDK to facilitate Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) participation among African American, African Immigrant and Latinx residents. Interviews were open-ended, and approximately 40 minutes per individual or small group. Listening sessions followed the same core questions as interviews but invited discussion across attendees.

Participants were invited to provide input on two key topics that will anchor the policy update:

- **Input on the 2050 goals.** Participants reviewed the feedback received during the Goals + Objectives listening sessions and were invited to provide feedback on the 2050 Goals + Objectives that were drafted following the process.
- **Reactions to draft Policy + Actions.** Participants were presented with an overview of the Policies + Actions draft (as of Nov. 2023) and invited to offer input on the items drafted and where drafted Policies + Actions could be added to, edited or enhanced.

Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) -- Equity Cohort Data

In addition, SDK has conducted a preliminary analysis of the Travel Behavior Inventory responses collected by our team and the Equity Cohort assembled to facilitate survey responses, and has catalogued stories, examples and anecdotes captured by our team and the Equity Cohort throughout survey implementation. Quotes and stories collected are offered throughout the report.

Overall, 437 households completed the TBI with an SDK team member or staff of an Equity Cohort organization. This fell within the goal of collecting between 300 and 450 responses from African American, African Immigrant and Latinx households in the Twin Cities. A majority of respondents belong to these demographic groups. Specifically, 55% of respondents self-identify as African American or Black, 21% identify as African Immigrant, and 22% identify as Latinx.

Household income, travel modes and time, rent, cost of travel, and other TBI variables captured from these respondents are offered throughout the report as a first-person illustration of policy topics discussed. Data is provided in simple descriptive statistics – median and mean – and no data was weighted. In some instances, TBI data is compared with Census data or data from RSG’s complete TBI response pool. These comparative data sources are noted when relevant. Data analysis is incorporated to add insight and direction on implementation for each Goal-area.

Over-Arching Themes

Stakeholders engaged were invited to provide feedback on the TPP Goals + Objectives, as well as draft Policies + Actions designed to move the region toward these Goals + Objectives. While a substantial portion of feedback received was specific to exact Goals, Objectives, Policies or Actions, stakeholders also offered consistent input that is broad and topical in nature, that provides over-arching frames to the goal-specific feedback received. This section summarizes those over-arching themes.

Theme #1: The Housing / Transportation Connection Is Important and Would Benefit from Explicit Acknowledgement.

The intersection between housing and transportation was a noteworthy area of feedback in the Goals + Objectives engagement, and the theme came through even stronger as stakeholders weighed in on specific Policies + Actions. For some business stakeholders, the housing and transportation connection is an asset to be leveraged in future plans, with transportation investments sparking added housing availability and overall housing strength. Others shared concern that gentrification and displacement for people of color can be a natural consequence of added transportation investments without significant policy interventions. Still other groups talked about the housing and transportation connection in simple, practical terms – affordable housing may not be affordable in someone’s life picture if the housing is inaccessible to transit needed to get to work or requires owning a car and driving long distances to get to jobs, groceries, and other necessities. In every instance and across stakeholder groups, the attention to connections between housing and transportation was clear and pervasive.

“I think our housing affordability story, our relative success and leadership on housing is, in part a transit story. But those dots are not connected. If you just look at the billions of dollars that have been invested [in transit]. We hear [about] the disproportionate number of units that have been developed along transit and the Green Line extension -- transit that is not operational -- would suggest that our transportation decisions are having direct and predictable consequences on volume and pricing of housing availability. That directly connects to economic competitiveness, too, [but we’re not talking about it].” – Business leader

“How do current transportation options, or ones under consideration, help or hinder people in obtaining and keeping stable affordable housing. We talk a lot about ‘stability starts with home,’ but then, what is the access to grocery store? What does it mean for access to work and livable wages? Better understanding the links between transportation and what it means for stable housing might be able to inform more of the work on both [transportation and housing] -- not just policy implications, but in housing planning and or how referrals are made, too.” – Social services leader

“The interconnected nature of like transportation and housing, and seeing how we are bringing in opportunities, whether that be funding or initiatives to fight displacement, [is important]. It’s not necessarily the transportation, in and of itself, that leads to displacement. For example, the Blue Line Extension [is] going through North Minneapolis, [and] a lot of landlords are already holding on to properties with the hope and expectation of increased value that Blue Line would give to those areas. The newer developments, higher rents, things [that follow transit investment] lead to displacement. [I want to encourage] focus on the housing aspect, even though this is transportation focus.” – Equity-focused leader

“Housing and transportation are so tightly coupled, that they really need to somehow be really clear in this plan. [The connection of housing and transportation] is such a big topic that anything you say about transportation [without acknowledging it] doesn’t do justice to the topic....If we are going to work on a transportation plan and don’t live with how it intersects with housing, we are probably solving for the wrong problems.” – Neighborhood association

Theme #2: Going Deep on Equity Is Seen as Important to Making Progress on Achieving TPP Goals.

Overall, stakeholders engaged are impressed with the Met Council’s clear articulation of equity and inclusion as a goal of the TPP. Others especially appreciated the Council’s stated language of “repairing harm” in communities that have faced challenges as a result of transportation investments. Additional aspects of the plan that stood out to stakeholders engaged included the creation of consistent community assessment tool, livability and environmental justice frameworks, and the transportation harms study. All are seen as important measures that can move the Met Council and region toward greater equity in transportation.

At the same time, some offered cautions. Specifically, one group suggested that Met Council specifically define equity as racial equity and focus on repairing harms to structurally marginalized groups. Others engaged suggested that the equity focus and measures expand to include people living with disabilities, youth, and other perspectives.

For some interviewed, adding detail about defining equity is about ensuring that implementation is directionally clear enough to ensure those who have faced harms as a result of transportation investments are centered in solutions, and protecting against diluting approaches to equity in implementation. These stakeholders fear that diluting equity’s definition in implementation could result in weaker or more disjointed implementation that prevents the progress they hope to see. Others raised questions about what internal work the Met Council expects to undertake so that staff are better equipped to steer toward more equitable outcomes.

It’s worth noting that these ideas of definitions were most clearly raised by groups working in specific aspects of advocacy and those at the forefront of thinking differently about topics like equity, engagement and others.

“Communities that have been historically marginalized left out of the process have been harmed by how the Metropolitan Area has grown, harmed by how development has happened. I don’t know if within the [TPP] there’s any sort of explicit definition or intentionality around who and what communities are being equated with equity, but I think it’s really important [to name explicitly].” – Equity-focused leaders

“Equity prioritization is fantastic” – Business groups

“I see ADA implementation as a piece of equity, because [disability] is often an underrepresented community, and especially as able-bodied humans, that ranking this, it’s so easy for that to then be lower” – Equity-focused leader

“I think that’s exciting to see [equity] called out and the [equity objectives]. It’s great to see anti-displacement and gentrification strategies. I would encourage the addition of funding community benefit policies as well... [For example, in the Blue Line Coalition], a lot of community partners are asking for rental assistance programs, or new business incubators, or workforce programs – not just to ensure that people aren’t getting displaced, but so that there’s mechanisms for them to directly benefit from projects.” – Climate-friendly transportation groups

“Based on the information I’ve seen, we’re in an era in which poverty and people with lower incomes are dispersing across the entire region, including to some areas that will be harder to serve with anything other than single occupant vehicles. As a region, figuring out how to provide efficient transit service to places that are dense enough to have ridership, where the transit service has a good solid business model behind it, facing a dispersion, a disbursement of people across kind of a vast auto-dependent region that we have [will be important to achieving the equity goals].” – Business groups

Theme #3: Policies + Actions Proposed Rely On Technology; Some Would Like to See Balance With Behavior Change Strategies.

Some stakeholders interviewed observed that Policies + Actions proposed generally, and especially in the area of climate change, emphasize new materials more than behavior change strategies to achieve the policy goals. Examples include the emphasis on electric vehicle infrastructure, porous pavement, and others. These astute observers noted that technology solutions may be easier to demonstrate clear progress, but they are less likely to create the enduring change needed for mode shift or other ambitious goals of the Council’s TPP. The Met Council’s stated Work Groups and Technical Assistance strategies are positive progress to this end, but the stakeholders who made this observation would hope to see these strategies emphasized or expanded upon to ensure an equal balance with technology-driven methods of reducing greenhouse gas and supporting mode-shift, which they interpret to be an over-arching theme of many TPP Policies + Actions, broadly.

"I'm reminded of the fact that we are such a car dependent culture. Even as I work with young people, first thing they want when they have means is a car. They want a car. So I'm wondering, in order to make these plans successful, what are you thinking about in terms of cultural shifts within the population to move away from the current modes of transportation? [Moving to using] these improvements that you're postulating, [culture change] has to be part of the consideration. Otherwise, you'd have a brand-new shiny thing, and nobody using it." – Equity-focused leader

"Making sure that there's a plan for both the infrastructure and [also] making sure that it's producing the intended results that we want to see. Like with mode shift I don't want that to be interpreted as saying 'all we need is more education [to change behavior]. We don't need to shame people more. We need to tell people you should be taking the bus or walking, biking more. That [alone is] never going to work.'" – Climate-friendly transportation group

"I think a lot of times [as businesses] you look at policies [like TPP] and they are clearly important.... But there's also this sense of, 'How does this help my business? How do we build an economy in the region that achieves these goals?' Because if we're successful, a lot of that success is going to be tied to how businesses are able to be supportive and successful in our economy." – Business group

"I grew up on public transportation. So to me, it's music to my ears, but my children did not. And their children will not. They're all car dependent. Particularly if you grew up in suburban Minnesota, you're going to be car dependent, as in many major cities, because work is centralized in certain places that you typically need a car to get to. If you spent 10, 15, 20 years [driving everywhere], to all of a sudden shift to public transportation, whatever that looks like, however enticing it is, is a cultural shift that I think needs to be addressed. That's my only observation." – Equity-focused leader

Theme #4: Coordination Across Jurisdictions + Sectors Is Seen as Key to Successful Implementation.

Across stakeholder groups interviewed and engaged, the topic of cross-jurisdictional and cross-sector coordination emerged as a consistent point of interest for implementing Policies + Actions. Some pointed the important role that private capital will play in investing in businesses and developments around transportation investments – or at least the catalytic role that transportation investment can have in private investment. Others talked about the importance of coordinating across jurisdictions in project planning to ensure that natural resources planning is taken into account. Still others talked about the importance of enhancing coordination across jurisdictions and sectors in managing construction sites, responses to homeless encampments, keeping sidewalks and transportation facilities free of snow and debris, and other simple, practical ways that the public – and especially vulnerable people like low income and the unhoused – experience the transportation system. In all instances, stakeholders interviewed believe that enhancing Met Council's capacity to lead and participate in coordination efforts will be essential to effectively implementing many aspects of the TPP.

“We're trying to create a positive environment... and build up the American Indian cultural corridor, and it feels like we're living and working in a prison now because of those [fences]. When they first went up, we did a lot of outreach to the jurisdictions with these complaints, and MnDOT the commissioner saw called me saying ‘Things that are going to change,’they went and put up nicer fences.....They do look nicer, but...you can see right where the MnDOT property ends because the nice fences stop, and then when it's County, it's the cyclone fence or if it's the transit, and it's fans. [I feel frustrated] like ‘Really?’ Somehow, we're unified enough to put up with those fences originally, but...couldn't you do it in a coordinated way?” – Equity-focused leader

“[Met Council] should hire a senior person to do just partnership engagement and then just be present, be engaging, be translating. There's the connective tissue, they don't actually have it.... It's a long-standing challenge. You need people with their actual jobs and capabilities to do that work. It creates a lot of value and saves a lot of time. But the problem is the folks who aren't doing [ongoing engagement] aren't getting it and that's why it's not happening.” – Business group leader

“What's important is that watershed districts get early notification that something is going to change in their area. Then we can bring forward other projects. We can't do a project unless we have land available, and the only land available is private owners, which is very hard to capture, or public construction projects like highways. When we have advanced notice that something's going to occur in this area, we can then bring forward other projects ahead of time and create a lot of additional benefits in terms of water quality that can be achieved.” – Watershed and land use group leader

“Sometimes the plans for construction aren't communicated well to nearby properties so that they can really support residents and know what's happening. I can think of instances where cars were towed, because some kind of parking restrictions were put in place but not well communicated. For individuals that may be in shelter or supportive housing and do have a vehicle, the loss of a car weighs more heavily and has a bigger impact than [for people] who are able to pay and retrieve things more quickly.” – Social services group leader

“[Coordination] plays into a much bigger issue as we think about the challenges with the homelessness crisis and encampments [near construction sites] ...If we know that people are congregating there, then what's being done to help make sure that people know where else they can go?... Are we already thinking about a more dignified response to services? Especially in areas where construction was happening.... watching somebody in a wheelchair trying to move themselves across like a muddy street because there is no alternative is frustrating. So, maintenance is more than just repaving and paint.” – Social services group leader

Goal-Specific Insights, Data

SDK interviews and listening sessions provided stakeholders from diverse perspectives and some policy knowledge with an opportunity to view the draft Policies + Actions that would guide the metro region's transportation policy and funding for the next decade. Participants and interviews provided direct insights on implementation hopes and expectations for each TPP Goal-area. In addition, Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) data is incorporated under each relevant goal-area to provide individual travel behavior of underserved communities that could add context to how people may be impacted by the proposed Policies + Actions in the TPP.

Goal Area 1: Our region is equitable and inclusive.

Theme: Defining “Benefit” of 40% investment will be essential. Stakeholders are encouraged, curious about the transportation harms study's ability to answer this question.

Stakeholders engaged are encouraged to see the Met Council commit to investing 40% of transportation benefits overburdened, underserved communities, and eager for more detail about how the council will achieve these ambitious aims. The prospect of helping to guide and inform these investments is encouraging to many people engaged, while some are skeptical about what measures of benefit or harm could look like. Those skeptical point to past efforts wherein implicit bias and privilege had undue influence over science that justified several scientific and infrastructure decisions. Others emphasized the opportunity of repairing harms is also an opportunity to improve outcomes – and the attention to a positive frame could bring greater momentum to efforts.

“Models for where and how to build key infrastructure -- a lot of times those models will not include robust and really holistic measures of community wellness and access to opportunity. It might be useful to highlight that needs to be prioritized in some way. It would be great to bring together a group of stakeholders from community, from advocacy and from business sectors to really grapple with ‘what is missing from some of these analyses?’” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“I would recommend just broadening the scope. It's not just about harm mitigation, but there's a huge opportunity, I think, to both improve equitable access to care and then also improve health outcomes and social determinants of health, social drivers of health for underrepresented and marginalized communities, through the transportation network.” – Social service group

“[Some say], ‘We don't play politics, we're not in that realm. We make decisions based on the data.’ The thing is that the data has a presumption of neutrality or of independence, of being unbiased. That is a bit of a fallacy because, depending

on what data you use and who you're looking at, how you're assessing the impacts and to whom, the data tells a different story. Data that has been used traditionally has been to favor folks who live in suburban communities and who typically are mainstream white and middle to upper income....” – Social service group

“If there’s an opportunity somewhere [to] think about the internal practices of operationalizing and implementing equity criteria in a really meaningful way [that would be great].” – Equity-focused leader

Theme: Anti-displacement and gentrification are concerns that flow from the connection between housing and transportation.

Concerns about displacement and fear of gentrification were a substantial focus of conversation over-and-above respondents’ attention to the connection of housing and transportation. For many of these respondents, anti-displacement and gentrification is about ensuring that future transportation and transit investments do not push out or price out the low-income individuals, often renters, currently living in a neighborhood. Some business groups engaged focused comments on the opposite side of this issue – the high volume of private capital that often follows large-scale transit investments. However, a strong majority of people engaged placed greater focus on a commitment to seeing the Met Council support policies, programs and strategies that can help low-income renters who live in neighborhoods that will receive significant transportation or transit investments get access to the ownership capital, technical assistance, job training, or other support needed to take full advantage of these opportunities. For these individuals, anti-displacement strategies are a core component of transportation’s potential to advance equity.

“As neighborhoods are gaining more investment and transportation ... displacement is so closely tied. I’m wondering what it looks like to [implement] the strategies that were vaguely named earlier about fighting the gentrification that leads to displacement. I see that is such a important piece to this.” – Equity-focused leader

“There’s a big role for the Council and Metro Transit to play in thinking about transit as a backbone to community and how it interacts with and intersects small business development, community gathering, housing, community health, all of that sort of stuff. Wherever that can be interrelated in the plans, I think, are fantastic.” – Corridor coalitions

“Giving more organizations access to transit-oriented development grants [would be a benefit]. [Our organization/nonprofit is not far from the light rail and TOD] is really about making the spaces outside of our organizations safe by being able to have more eyes on the street.” – Equity-focused leader

Theme: The emphasis on Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) designs and accessible transportation is applauded. Some stakeholders have questions about how costs will play out in implementation.

Several stakeholders engaged appreciated the attention to ADA designs in the draft TPP Policy + Actions. However, questions about costs remain. Specifically, some recognize that ADA compliance alone could take up a substantial portion of the region's road funding over the coming decade. These stakeholders questioned how ADA implementation would be prioritized relative to other funding priorities in the TPP. Others observed that Metro Mobility remains an essential but cumbersome, costly service for low-income individuals, such as those on a fixed income that can accompany disability. Overall, stakeholders are attentive to the costs involved with achieving ADA standards, and the importance of creating a more accessible, affordable transportation system for people with disabilities.

"When I see Metro Mobility.... that's really not cost effective for those who are living on \$100 spend a month. Is there anything that's going to be put into [the TPP] to look at [the cost of using Metro Mobility] for the oppressed populations?"
– Equity-focused leaders

"There was a focus of ... increasing access for users with disabilities. I'm curious to see what the Met Council is thinking about action steps from there. Metro Mobility has been woefully underfunded, but I'd be curious to see what course of action they would, or investments they would be looking at for Metro Mobility." – Equity-focused leaders

"Full ADA compliance is one of those things that is so hard and expensive to get toward but it's so important. The city of Minneapolis is trying to get toward full ADA compliance and they have a long way to go and need massive amounts of investment to make that happen." – Corridor coalition

"I'm here because the people I serve have either intellectual or developmental disabilities... Historically, they are not a priority [for policy makers]. In the past, [it felt like] the only real consideration was mitigating any potential negative impacts to the people I serve, as well as the providers and other agencies involved like residential. Services like Metro Mobility are important for them." – Social services group

"Things are so interconnected.... ADA is something I see as a piece of equity because that is often an underrepresented community." – Equity-focused leader

Theme: Equitable enforcement is seen as a strong opportunity for Met Council leadership – and should be monitored to ensure fair implementation.

A handful of stakeholders focused comments on the Met Council’s proposed study of traffic enforcement, as well as the proposed Work Group on Intelligent Traffic System (ITS) technology. Stakeholders appreciate that Met Council is taking steps to understand these topics and feel that the Met Council is best positioned to facilitate achieving a comprehensive view on the issue that cities or counties alone could not achieve. At the same time, some cautioned that automated speed enforcement sometimes unfairly targets people of color, among other challenges. These respondents encouraged the Met Council to take a cautious approach o relying on these technologies.

“When I look at cities that I’m aware of that have [ITS] systems, like Chicago, and how inequitable the placement of those cameras are [I become concerned]. The farther you get out of black communities, the less you see those traffic cameras. Obviously, [Met Council is planning] a work group for this, that’ll be covering those things, but that [concern for ITS] something I wanted to flag. It popped in my head right away when I saw that.” - TBI Equity Cohort

“I was glad to see on the list of potential things for Met Council to study was equitable traffic enforcement. It’s a question of our time, the Met Council is in a great position to help all of us answer. There are concerns about the impact of automated speed enforcement in poor communities or communities of color. The fact that there is no level of accountability for reckless driving in much of our region feels like it’s in direct contrast to our goal to allow people to use active transportation to get around their neighborhoods. It feels like it’s really important, but it feels like a bigger question than any one municipality. The Met Council is in a role where their leadership would be really wonderful.” – Business group

“Is the Met Council looking at collecting comprehensive data? For example, is there a place where people can report incidents not necessarily tied to the police and then bystander intervention training or training for trip personnel as well for intervention?” – Equity-focused leader

Theme: Attention to engagement, cultural sites in transportation projects is appreciated. Some hope Met Council can go further and offer its advertising capacity for public messages.

The Met Council’s multiple engagement strategies and approaches in the Policies + Actions – from empowering communities to help identify important cultural sites, to funding engagement practices and time reimbursements in the Regional Solicitation – are viewed positively by those engaged. No negative comments were received on any proposed engagement actions. However, some did offer additional considerations to further implementation. Native American communities engaged pointed out that their involvement in identifying culturally significant locations extends beyond current tribal territory boundaries and should be viewed as Metro wide.

Others suggested that Met Council extend its attention to engagement and communications to its trains and buses to support proactive, positive community messages that reinforce programs already underway on the transit system. All suggestions emphasized the careful time needed for deep engagement and clear, thoughtful, accessible communication. People appreciate Met Council's commitment to these approaches through the TPP and encourage implementation as Met Council carries out future work, and as projects that spring from the TPP are implemented.

"How can we make [Metro Transit advertising] spaces more accessible for different messages that groups want to get out? Whether it be for help for opioids or homelessness assistance. It seems like a perfect mix where Met Council could offer that space for free if it was around helping the community. I really think we're missing a lot of opportunity." – Equity-focused leader

"When they're talking about doing some of the planning or seeking input, it's making sure [engagement is] convenient. If people can't attend, it's key to have other opportunities to provide input so that providing input itself isn't a barrier, either because of time or understanding of where to go to submit information. A lot of people don't have the time, they're already frustrated, they don't feel that their voice matters, which doesn't do much to support that ongoing engagement. It feels like there's an authentic attempt to try to be more transparent and inclusive in this process. And it takes a different level of engagement. It takes more time to do that. Not everyone can do an online survey, right? Not everyone can attend a meeting." – Social services organization

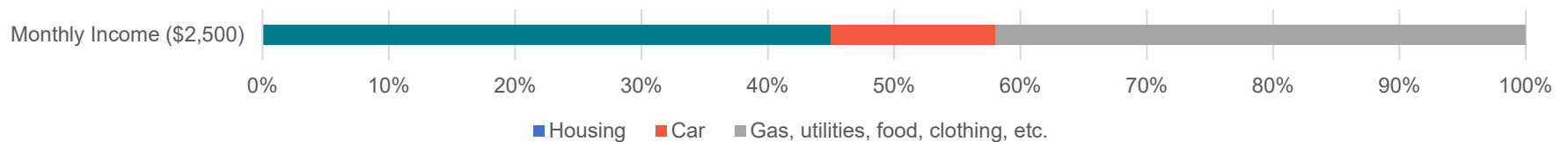
"We have a lot of historical cultural sites, so when we talk about building new or even upgrading current transportation, I want to make sure that we're taking into consideration reaching out to the local Tribal Historic Preservation Offices verify we're not disrupting any sites. Unfortunately, you know, for people outside of our tribal community, there are a lot of sites here, in Minnesota up and down the river valleys and this is the places we lived, and so protecting those areas, but also in areas that are affected, returning them back to the natural state. That's huge to us." – Equity-focused leader

"It's nice that folks are starting to acknowledge our land and who used to live here, but along with that is more of how can we educate instead of just stating [the land acknowledgement]? How can we educate people of the history of these lands and of our ancestors that lived here?" – Equity-focused leader

TBI Theme: Transportation costs, lack of reliability are significant burdens for many Metro Area low-income individuals and people of color.

TBI responses collected by SDK and partners illustrate the substantial, inequitable cost burden that many low-income individuals and people of color navigate. Specifically, an overwhelming majority (98%) of SDK respondents fell into three targeted demographic groups – African American, African Immigrant, and Latinx. Figure 1 shows the median housing costs (\$1,125) and median car payment (\$325) totals reported as a portion of median reported income (\$30,000) for these respondents in the Twin Cities. As the graph illustrates, housing and car payments alone take up almost 60% of household income for many families.

Figure 1: TBI Median Housing, Automobile Costs as a Portion of Median Income



It's also worth noting that the cars of people in SDK's Equity Cohort of the TBI differ from the larger TBI population in key ways such as:

- **More Car Payments.** A full 43% of SDK's TBI respondents have a car payment. By contrast, the full TBI dataset published by RSG shows that only 25% of respondents have any car payment. The average car payment range is \$250 to \$499 per month, and the typical car age is 2013 (mean) to 2014 (median).
- **Older Cars.** The average car owned by SDK's TBI respondents is 11 years old (2013 model).
- **Less Reliable Transportation.** Across TBI surveys, SDK and partners heard multiple stories of households that had one car serving as the car for their extended family or friend group. Some talked about driving children and neighbor's children to a variety of activities. Others talked about serving as a ride to work or school for friends and family, either because others didn't have a car, someone's car is in the shop, or they're saving money for a car repair. It's worth noting that **25% of trips reported** in SDK's Equity Cohort have someone from another household in the car.

"On average, we inspect 70 new cars a month. Of those, 20, or almost 30 percent, are DNI, meaning "do not invest." They are no longer safe to be on the road. They have a bad head gasket, they need a transmission, the frame is rusted and this is serious safety issue. So in talking about how reliant folks are on cars and how that is a mode of transportation for their whole social system, we're also seeing that those cars are depreciating so quickly." – Equity cohort member

Goal Area 2: We Protect and Restore Natural Systems

Theme: Watershed districts engaged believe increased coordination on transportation projects and shared design standards can further Met Council goals.

Watershed districts and Green Step Community Coordinators were well represented in listening sessions, and all came with a consistent message: Encouraging more engagement of watershed districts in the planning of transportation projects and earlier in the planning process. Watershed districts point to engineering expertise, natural filtration / green infrastructure, and funding as a few of the assets they can contribute to planning specific transportation projects. Some also suggested that the Council is well-positioned to create design standards or guidance that helps solidify suggested, expanded engagement of natural resource and water interests in transportation projects.

“One thing I’d like to see in relation to natural resources, water resources and climate resiliency, is if there’s an opportunity for the Council to establish some design standards or guidance on explicitly how to address some of those goals...in the design process, [that] would be really helpful.” – Water and land use group

“Keeping communication to the Met Council and watershed districts [open] for early engagement and collaboration are key aspects to help... make sure adequate stormwater treatment is being provided and minimizing impacts natural resources.” – Water and land use group

“Early coordination with all the interested agencies does provide a more holistic project potentially, so when developing construction projects, ensuring that you got the players at the table at the right time, so they can influence what goes on.” – Water and land use group

Theme: Road salt’s permanent impact on water quality is a concern for many engaged; some also conveyed a belief that the Met Council can offer important design guidance and leadership to the region on this topic.

Several water and land use stakeholders voiced an emphasis on discouraging salt use on roads in their comments. Some suggested that Met Council consider a study on alternatives to road salting for winter road maintenance, and others proposed that Met Council consider creating a design guide for water-friendly road and transit station design that minimizes the need for salt or chemicals while allowing for safe travel.

“We’re concerned primarily about salting... salting is all about transportation. And there are design criteria that define how to design facilities, transportation facilities, but from a study standpoint, I wonder if there couldn’t be something done to

reduce salting... We do see a lot of salting. I think salting can also fall into the maintenance and training. Can we train people to use less salt?" – Water and land use group

"One teaspoon of salt will pollute five gallons of water. And people are throwing salt all over the place. If you go to the county people and look at their costs for snow removal and winter months, their major or number one cost is the cost of salt...Think of the transit stations where you're trying to eliminate slips and falls in the wintertime and that kind of stuff. If you look at the design to move water away from areas where people are walking, if you think about that ahead of time, you're going to use less salt." – Water and land use group

"When we think about transportation, infrastructure and things of that nature, [and] the road design itself -- and this goes against some of the tree canopy stuff and urban heat island stuff -- can we design roads and transportation infrastructure in a way that limits the amount of salt that we've got to put on the road for public safety, utilizing the sun and things of that nature?" – Water and land use group

Theme: Stakeholders appreciate the added attention to green infrastructure, trees / urban canopy and natural filtration in the draft TPP.

Finally, stakeholders appreciated the attention to green infrastructure and natural filtration in the draft TPP Policies + Actions. Some specifically noted that communities that are more often home to people of color are often locations with fewer trees, green spaces, parks, or other amenities that can naturally cool space. These same neighborhoods can be home to more transportation infrastructure that can trap heat. These stakeholders appreciate Met Council's attention to the issue, and hope that the Council can encourage greenery beyond the roadway.

"In addition to food deserts, you know, there's just like lack of green spaces around transportation. People were just stuck waiting in the sun really hot and stuff like that." – Equity-focused leader

Goal Area 3: We Lead On Addressing Climate Change

Theme: Most stakeholders engaged are pleased to see Met Council taking a proactive approach to climate. Some want to see the Council go further.

Overall, most stakeholders engaged are encouraged to see Met Council explicitly naming climate change as priority areas for transportation, and they are hopeful that this explicit naming and elevation of the topics will signal a more assertive, strategic approach on climate change in implementation. They are impressed by language like “Lead” on climate.

However, some did offer cautions and concerns. Some interviewed voiced disappointment that Met Council’s climate objectives – and specifically, the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) objective -- do not go further than MnDOT’s stated goals. According to these respondents, the metro region is where VMT reduction has the greatest chance of success; for the state to reach its goal the metro region will need to go further in VMT reduction. These stakeholders hope to see Met Council’s “Leading on Climate Change” extend to new approaches and higher targets. Others deeply involved in climate change work suggested that climate action, broadly, must become more varied and urgent to effectively counter climate change. This perspective was exclusive to those working on climate change daily, pointing to a need for greater stakeholder education and engagement to take such steps.

“A 20% per capita reduction [in VMT] by 2050 -- that's what the state of Minnesota has talked about for the state level VMT reduction goal. If the metropolitan region achieved that goal and only reduced VMT 20% per capita by 2050, there's no way the state would be able to reach its VMT target.... The bulk of mode shift potential is in the Metro region.” – Climate-friendly transportation groups

“Given the kind of gains we need to see in the climate space, I think we must get very aggressive. Already, with the use of the money that was deployed for transportation in 2022, at the federal level, the vast majority went to roads and highways. We need to be more aggressive to counter the trend with the federal investments.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“Instead of following the state, in some ways, setting a trend that is asking the state to then push the envelope [would be preferred]. There might not be much wiggle room, but [VMT] might also be a space where [Met Council] can be like, okay, the state's doing this, but we're going even further. In places like New York City and New York state, you see that kind of dynamic -- the city leading first, and then the state following and creating that sort of mandate. I hope that Council sees itself as a leader in the space rather than [just] aligning with the state.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“That VMT reduction goal [is] woefully underwhelming [for] where we need to be. When the discussions were happening about the statewide goal, it was identified that Metro Area would need to get closer to at least 40% VMT reduction so the state could get to 20% VMT reduction.” – Climate-friendly transportation groups

“A big push from the state is moving toward Net Zero and electrification. We're actually doing it here in Prairie Island. We have a huge Net Zero program that we're facilitating right now.” – Equity-focused leader

Theme: Some question whether the electric vehicle goals are achievable.

The TPP objectives, policies and actions that emphasized electric vehicle adoption as a core tenant of achieving the Met Council’s climate change goals met some resistance from stakeholders engaged. Specifically, several are skeptical that Met Council would be able to influence vehicle purchases sufficiently to achieve the goal. Others pointed to the high costs of buying new vehicles and the challenges that low-income households and people who live in apartment buildings or rental properties would have obtaining the infrastructure needed for an electric vehicle. Overall, a noteworthy segment of stakeholders engaged appreciate the intent of electric vehicles, but are skeptical as to whether the Council broadly, and low-income individuals in the Twin Cities specifically, would be able to transition the region’s vehicles enough to meet the goal.

“There's no way that by 2035 100% of new lightweight vehicles are going to be zero emission. There's no one projecting that, so I think it's irresponsible that the Met Council is making the assumption because they have no way of influencing that.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“I'd see Met Council as being more aligned with making sure the infrastructure to support that shift is in place. But the shift itself stood out to me as something that maybe isn't easy for Met Council to address. It might not be something you want as an objective.” – Water and land use group

“The devil's in the details. As an example, if you want to get to zero emission type things, in other words, fully electric vehicles, the problem you're going to get into is infrastructure for being able to plug in. I happen to own an electric vehicle, and I understand completely where that issue is. We can't drive our vehicle to Duluth because there is not the infrastructure there. Even if they say it's there, someone has already ripped off the wires and destroyed the thing.” – Equity-focused leader

“Old vehicles can have a much higher impact on emissions. And knowing the market that we're in with the cost of used cars going up, with folks investing more in their current vehicle, keeping it on the road longer, I would add that like subsidizing those repairs that reduce emissions could have a really big impact on the overall goal around climate change.” – TBI Equity Cohort

“The 45% target seems especially unrealistic because of how expensive cars are getting and how long people are holding on to their vehicle. If we’re going to turn over half of the vehicle fleet in the state in about 10 years, we would have to see nearly 100% of vehicle sales being electric today.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

Theme: Mitigating potential floods and extreme heat of climate change are aspects of the Policies + Actions that many stakeholders appreciate.

Several stakeholders highlighted the flood mitigation and extreme heat Policies + Actions as climate change strategies where Met Council’s forward thinking is appreciated. These leaders and groups believe that Met Council has an important role to play in facilitating coordinated approaches to climate change, raising awareness of the topics across cities and counties, and developing effective design standards to mitigate the consequences of extreme heat or flooding. Some did also caution that actions such as elevating roads to mitigate floods could have dangerous consequences for other considerations, such as watersheds and runoff. Met Council’s potential leadership in creating regional standards and approaches on flood mitigation and extreme heat are seen as a potentially effective tool in addressing this concern.

“It’s got to be a holistic approach [to identifying and preventing flooding] across a lot of different disciplines. I’m concerned about if we’re trying to capture more water off our roads, where we put that water. Will it be rain gardens? Any utility lines in the way, how the roads interface with what we’re doing in other places [all of those could be impacted by a flood].” – Water and land use group

“Flood risk along highways and roads, and especially along the I-35 corridor, is something we’ve observed through modeling and had been petitioned to look into by surrounding communities.” – Water and land use group

“Extreme heat and vulnerability to extreme heat in the summertime. And I’m hoping that more of our communities in the region can start to socialize a more active dialogue around cooling strategies for entire communities across the entire region, to prevent the impacts of extreme heat on people and natural systems. There’s a lot of potential for not just raising awareness of it, but for the Council to recognize the role they play with the planning function and with the regional parks and trails to play an active role in cooling our region.” – Business group

“Building roads at an elevation to get them out of flood danger. I think that’s a slippery slope, because you can’t just add elevation to a road without pushing that water to somewhere else. There has to be [runoff] mitigation strategies to be sure that we’re not just filling where a road goes.” – Water and land use group

Theme: Some stakeholders observed the need for a transformational approach to solving Climate problems – and see opportunity for added Met Council leadership in this area.

While most stakeholders engaged focused comments on the specific Policies + Actions put forth by the Met Council, some also offered more conceptual feedback that can be best summarized as a paradigm shift. A handful of stakeholders each offered different ideas for how the Met Council could contribute as a partner in new strategies aimed at building new structures, approaches, and models for working differently. These leaders perceive that many of the approaches and strategies in the draft Policies + Actions. imply strategic changes executed within a siloed way of working. These stakeholders suggested that Met Council consider new approaches to frame and pursue its work that compounds for positive outcomes.

“This group is a great example that diversity is the key here. There are so many different priorities, and sometimes they seem incongruent with one another. But I fully believe if we stop with the reductionist approach and start to think about multiple benefits, we can get to it. It’s a tall order to try and address all these objectives, and nobody’s going to come away from this [with everything they want].” – Water and land use group

“The first thing is as practitioners, whatever our field, we like to take this reductionist approach. It’s as if we look at each individual silo, then we can address that silo. But none of these [siloes] exist independent of one another. As I was putting together my priority list, I was looking at three -- protecting natural resources, addressing climate change, and safety -- and I think all can fit into the same category. How do we get the outreach out there to get people to think differently?” – Water and land use group

“There’s all this work going on to create a decarbonization economy, and it’s not about mitigating, trying to shave off carbon from things that are destroying the climate. There are actual solutions -- totally next generation, ways of doing things. And Met Council has no relationship to this conversation.” – Business group

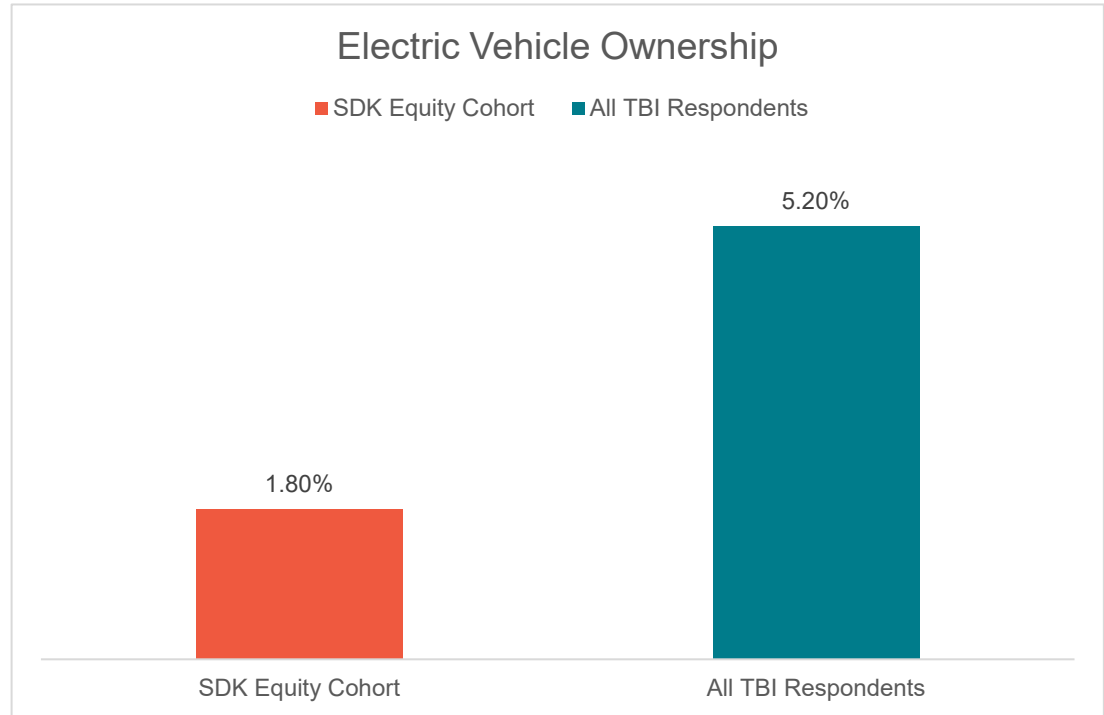
“We really have to think about is, ‘What are the problems we’re trying to solve?’ Are we trying to solve short-term problems caused by our current transportation system, or do we want to design a new transportation system which can solve all kinds of problems?” – Neighborhood group

TBI respondents were asked questions about the cars they own and how they travel. Responses offer important lessons as the Met Council weighs feedback received on the TPP Policies + Actions. Relevant findings are summarized below.

TBI Theme: Electric vehicle adoption will likely be a challenge for low-income, people of color.

As the chart at right illustrates, electric vehicle ownership is only 1.8% among the SDK's Equity Cohort of TBI respondents. The broader, weighted TBI data shows that 5.2% of all metro region respondents report owning an electric vehicle.

The average income of SDK's Equity Cohort respondents is only \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year, as opposed to an average income range of \$75,000 to \$95,000 among all TBI respondents. SDK's cohort also owns older vehicles with payments common on cars 8 years old or older. Given these realities among SDK's Equity Cohort respondents, it appears that seeing a greater adoption of electric vehicles would be difficult to achieve for many.



Goal Area 4: Our communities are healthy and safe

Theme: Transit safety is top-of-mind for most engaged.

Stakeholders engaged continued to focus on transit safety as a primary conversation point on the topic of safety, broadly. Leaders from BIPOC communities engaged shared personal stories of being afraid to take transit themselves, or fear of letting their children take Metro Transit buses and trains. On the other hand, business leaders from suburbs voiced concern about what they hear about safety on transit. For these stakeholders, the perception of safety challenges on transit are a deterrent from coming to downtown Minneapolis or Saint Paul for events and activities. These business leaders also perceive transit safety challenges as a deterrent to attracting employees from the core cities. The overall tone is consistent with comments heard in spring 2023, and more indicative of media stories and personal experiences than any specific component of proposed Policy + Actions.

“Some of our members might be [transit riders] and other Native people from other tribal nations, as well. I think safety is a huge piece. Making sure that Metro Transit always builds policies and procedures that always reflect the safety of the individuals that are using the services or that will be in and around those services. That’s huge.” – Equity-focused leader

“Something that was a common point among a lot of the people I talked to who use public transportation was safety. [One woman who completed the TBI said she] had a part time job at the airport and a part time job at the Mall of America and transit would have been a straight shot. She said her husband was like ‘No, don’t get on the train.’ I’ve had a few people with kids who are like ‘I don’t feel safe bringing my child on the train’.” – TBI Equity Cohort

“For me as a Native woman, I could take the bus here because I live [nearby]. But I’m not going to do that because I work a lot at night and I absolutely don’t feel safe taking the public transportation, especially in the winter, when it’s dark.” – Equity-focused leader

“We have the Southwest LRT Line coming online in 2027. Safety’s a huge issue here. You know, the plan has always been that it’s a great opportunity to have people find jobs out here and commute into the cities as well. But if safety and the line is not there, then people won’t utilize it. That kind of ruins the whole purpose of the project.” – Business group

“Safety is definitely an important factor [in transit]. I think there’s a lot of positive momentum right now, with all the press about the fare enforcement and the code of conduct. I would encourage the Met Council to really demonstrate results and metrics to help communicate that and the positive outcomes [from these safety efforts].” – Business group

“I’m a person who has three daughters. They don’t even take the bus for the simple fact that when they start talking transit, they have to deal with being approached, being made uncomfortable while they’re waiting at the bus stop. How do you

make them feel safe when people are hanging out [at bus stops and transit stops.] Especially when you start talking about people selling drugs or someone approaching them, it's hard [for a parent].” – Equity-focused leader

“When I think about workers’ rights, it’s the transit workers that come to mind first. Given the fact that just statistically, [transit workers are] predominantly people of color, questions of safety become a lot more complex, as well. [Going back to the safety actions], how do we center the people who are making the [transit] system go, [in the actions we take]?” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“Here in the ‘burbs, we’ve heard so much about Twins games and Vikings games, which is fine and great. But safety [at these events] just continues to come up. If we are pulling any employees, from any other parts [of the Twin Cities] who are utilizing the transit options and are coming this way, it’s all about safety.” – Business group

“Reliability and safety. People are concerned about getting on a bus and not getting beat up at this point. And so that has to be resolved to the point that people truly trust the system.” – Water and land use group

Theme: Pedestrian safety is key for community safety, transit access.

While transit safety was a primary point of discussion for many, others engaged pointed to pedestrian safety as a top priority for the Transportation Policy Plan. Several emphasized how important walking is to accessing transit for those who rely on it, and as a means of transportation, generally. Others highlighted how dangerous some intersections can be, and how those fast roads and limited pedestrian crossing times limit people’s ability to access key destinations, including bus stops, by foot. The TPP’s multiple funding opportunities for first and last mile connections to transit, and walking and biking facilities generally, is seen as an asset to the plan among those engaged.

“I think it’s worth lifting pedestrian safety [as important]. A few years back I was on the City of Minneapolis’ Toward Zero Death [committee]. We saw data that Native American people are so much more likely to be involved as pedestrians in a crash. Of course, a pedestrian and vehicle collision will [seriously hurt] the pedestrian and it directly impacts our community. I would like to lift up pedestrian safety or eliminating pedestrian crashes as a priority.” -- Equity group leader

“The people that we serve, we talk a lot about how their feet are their main source of transportation.” – Social services group

“[Bus stops on Highway 55] can be difficult to get to because the pedestrian light is so short when crossing Olson [Memorial Highway]. You have to wait for so long for all the cars. There have been teenagers from our neighbor that got hit by cars on Olson. So just thinking about the accessibility of roads, crossing is obviously an issue. What if you’re in a wheelchair

or you have limited mobility, and it takes you 10 minutes or more to cross the street? You're going to miss your bus, because the bus stop is across the highway, but the light is so long and then there's such a short time to cross.” – TBI Equity Cohort group

“Putting metrics out around 15% of the total year’s fatalities seems disingenuous when we're trying to improve that mode share. This just doesn't seem very in line with the earlier, bigger, loftier goals. What if people are dying crossing the street, yet we don't have very many people crossing the street because it's not a friendly place to walk.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

Theme: For many metro region families, transit safety is ‘Safe Routes to School’

Several people from communities of color emphasized the important and challenging role that the transit system plays in helping children get to school. At one community focus group entirely of BIPOC leaders, several specifically noted the TPP’s focus on supporting “Safe Routes to School.” Their comments centered on two related concerns. First, they emphasized the important role that transit plays in getting many kids to and from schools – and how important it is to make transit routes kid-friendly at school times. Second, they highlighted the language of “Safe Routes to School” as implicitly excluding how many BIPOC children travel to and from school.

In another story shared by someone completing the TBI, a mother talked about placing her youngest daughter in a daycare a 20-minute drive away because that daycare would accept the daycare support she receives from the county. However, the daycare’s hours and drive time meant that she does not get back to her neighborhood in time to pick her other daughter up from school, which is 20 minutes in the opposite direction. Instead, the 6th grade daughter takes Metro Transit home every afternoon. The mother has bought her daughter a cell phone to try to help her, but if she missed daycare pick up to help the older daughter this mother would quickly lose daycare benefits and, without daycare, her job.

In these stories and others, many stakeholders emphasized the parental anxiety and safety concerns of bringing children on transit or of asking children to navigate transit alone to get to and from school.

“[The plan says] support Safe Routes to School. Often there are people out [at the Hi-Lake transit stop] in the mornings before school starts and after school, and there should be like a violence prevention team or somebody, adult-wise, that are with those youth, separating them from what's happening. They're just going to school. Kids don't need to be exposed to so much. [That time] should really be a time when bus stops and train stations [are staffed with] adults and people that know how to talk to [kids] and make them feel safe.” – Equity-focused leader

“It’s hard to exit survival mode if you don’t feel like you can drive and this is a large part of it where the reliance on cars [becomes important]. The families that I talked to that have their cars in the shop felt completely hamstrung. They were like, ‘How am I going get my kids to school?’ They’re afraid to put them on the city bus in case it’s not safe. So [being without a car] limited their choices and their agency.” – TBI Equity Cohort

“Transit like light rail and buses is not family friendly, both from the safety concerns to the literal logistics of it. A lot of our families said ‘I’m working my tail off to keep my kids away from that. Why would I bring them on a light rail car to sit there and be around it for an hour?’ Then the literal logistics of it. [With] how long our transit takes in the city, [imagine] if you have like a toddler, a preteen, or three to four kiddos. Navigating all those kids getting out off the train -- where are we standing [on the train]? What are we doing for entertainment? It just isn’t the literal logistics of [transit make it hard with kids].” – TBI Equity Cohort

Theme: Safe Multi-Modal Connections help make walking, biking and transit easier to use.

Several stakeholders applauded Met Council’s TPP Policies + Actions for the emphasis on making walking and biking to and from transit stations easier. These respondents appreciate the system-wide approach that Met Council’s strategies suggest and want to see system strategies like these emphasized in things like local comprehensive plans and projects subject to the Regional Solicitation.

“The nearest station where I work is meant to be in Eden Prairie on Technology Drive. Once I get there, there’s no real safe route for me from that station to work. How are we working with local road authorities to address the spirit of this transportation plan [and call for first / last mile connections]?” – Water and land use group

“We do know that transit works better when there’s better connections. First mile/last mile is a very broad way of talking about that. I’d like to see more specific goal setting with respect to specific transit lines to be able to better support first and last mile transportation options. So instead of making it very broad, I want you to look at specific transit connections that we currently have, and how we can better feed them with first and last mile option.” – Neighborhood group

Theme: Stakeholders see transportation access as essential for health, health care access.

Several stakeholders highlighted the importance of Met Council’s attention to transportation impacts on health in the TPP and supporting Policies + Actions. Some talked about the importance of measuring environmental health outcomes, such as the correlation between location of transportation facilities and prevalence of respiratory illness, as important data that highlights the health consequences of transportation. Others emphasized the importance of transportation in helping people physically get to health care and mental health care. Still others talked about transportation as a Social Determinant of Health – that is, having

adequate transportation to get to the jobs and resources, and to incorporate physical activity in daily life, can have a significant impact on overall health and quality of life. In all instances, stakeholders appreciate that Met Council is acknowledging the link between health and transportation and will continue to build out this work through future work groups.

“A lot of the respiratory illnesses near north Minneapolis directly follow the redlining maps because of how they've been planned and how [neighborhoods and infrastructure have] been established. There are so many communities that have respiratory issues. There are kids that have asthma and various respiratory illnesses. So I think taking [these environmental health consequences] into account is essential because it's impacting a lot of families lives in that area.” – Equity-focused leader

“We're truly facing a massive public health crisis in mental health. Often the difference between an adult or child either being able to get the support that they need in their home, their school or their community, versus winding up in our emergency department or being hospitalized, is transportation.” – Social service organization

“When [people we serve] talk about the barriers to health care and mental health care, transportation is one of the most significant barriers. The request would be that as planning moves ahead, to consider how decisions will help to improve equitable access to healthcare and mental health care through equitable access to transportation.” – Social service organization

“I want to also mention that I do absolutely support and agree with the importance of transportation on health care outcomes. It's hugely important to ensure that, in providing transit, we ensure people can get around to where they need to go.” – Equity-focused leader

Goal Area 5: Our region is dynamic and resilient

Theme: Stakeholders appreciate widening the scope of transit station amenities and expanding features that increase usability, like wayfinding.

Several stakeholders offered praise for the broad list of station amenities and improvements eligible for funding under the drafted Policies + Actions. Others encouraged the Met Council and Metro Transit to go further in its plans by emphasizing the important role that transit stops play in the communities where they are located. Some of the station-area improvements that those engaged named as important to include are: attention to snow removal; lighting; and wayfinding or signage that makes navigating the transit stop and the community around it easy and accessible for people, no matter their language, ability or familiarity with the area.

“An important thing that Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit can do is think about how to support community development around station areas, outside of and adjacent to the boundaries of the specific station. Metro Transit is just as concerned about what happens [the station area] as someone else. It’s key for safety, placemaking, and activation and community gathering and economic development, housing, and more.” – Corridor coalitions

“I also wanted to mention ADA requirements and ensuring that our folks that have limitations are able to safely get into bus shelters. I know here on some of our streets in the north end, we have people standing with strollers on top of snow mounds, because bus shelters are not cleaned out. And it’s just an impossibility. People are standing on the streets. And I’m not quite sure what if anything, could be done with that with Metro Transit, but just kind of maintaining the conversations.” – Equity-focused leader

“Something I heard consistently from seniors and from folks with disabilities was [concern about] the snow mounds in front of the bus stop. There should be a weatherizing and accessibility budget in transit center amenities. Safety and comfort can include weather and how dangerous it is for people climb on top of a giant snow mound just to try to get to the bus, [which is an even bigger concern for people] using mobility assistance devices.” – Equity-focused leader

“The work to improve maintenance and station functionality, I think, is a very important priority that I see reflected in this plan. It’s also important to think about that first half mile or a quarter mile even from the station. How does that contribute to a safe and well-kept station, as well? Things like snow plowing and sidewalks, maintenance matters. Metro Transit has a really important role to maintain snow removal at stations, and it doesn’t do anything if the property right next door is not doing that and a person in a wheelchair or with disabilities can’t get to that station.” – Corridor coalition

“At [local college], 40% or 45% of the students use transit wayfinding and arrival time was so huge for transit connections. [Getting to stops on time is] such a big barrier and I think for new residents, immigrants, or other new users can get access because of Wayfinding is huge. It's very cool to see [amenities like Wayfinding] added here.” – Equity-focused leader

Theme: Access to jobs is a critical component of transportation – and the opportunity costs of relying on transit to get to work are steep.

In both the stakeholder engagement and conversations with individuals completing the TBI, the importance of making jobs accessible via transit was highlighted as a critical part of the transportation system. At the same time, all acknowledge the significant time investments needed to take transit to and from destinations like jobs, grocery stores, or other locations. Several people engaged through the TBI talked about riding buses for 90 minutes or more each way to get to work. Others talked about saving all errands for Saturday, when a group will take the bus from North Minneapolis to Roseville to do all shopping that isn't available in their neighborhood – Target, shopping malls and more. In each of these examples and more, transit makes different locations accessible that otherwise would not be accessible in real, literal terms. At the same time, accessibility is a relative term for some people and households because the significant time commitment needed to take transit means other priorities become unavailable with each transit trip.

“Our neighborhood has been visioning a plan for the next 10 years, and transportation has been huge...bus service and transit are hugely important. We don't have any big industry where people can walk to a job, so they're actually going out of the neighborhood to get a job and they don't have a car. Doing some more, what I would call 'micro-work' in these neighborhoods that are pretty much disenfranchised, don't have vehicles or a way to get to jobs is hugely important to us.” – Neighborhood organization

“You know, typically bus lines are connecting people from one disadvantaged community to the next. But you won't find a bus line from North Minneapolis, where I live, to a suburb like Brooklyn Park. That doesn't exist. Or even to other parts of the city. Can we be explicit about connecting or designing routes that will connect people to opportunity and that will reverse some of the harms we saw from redlining?” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“Part of making transit easier is making transit faster and more convenient. [I believe] Metro Transit is not advocating strong enough for 24/7 dedicated bus lanes, particularly on their arterial bus rapid transit routes that they're building like crazy, if we're going to create fast, reliable transit.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“I can appreciate the extra time that it takes to get places on public transit, especially if there's no direct route. For people who are underserved or overlooked, locations are still inaccessible because of the amount of time that it takes to get from one place to the other or how far somebody has to go to get on that bus route.” – Social services organization

“A part of the work that we do is bringing people in and finding employment for them. It’s just not effective for people to be on public transit for three and a half hours to get from say West St. Paul to a very nice employment opportunity at New Brighton. That’s the concern that we have been hearing. It just doesn’t make sense in terms of equity. Imagine – you hop on the bus, then make two transfers to New Brighton. It would take 3 ½ hours to get to work for a four-hour shift that is decently paid, and then it’s another 3 ½ hours to get back. Those have been the significant concerns we’ve heard, when people are looking for an \$18 an hour job.” – Social Service group

“If you have a system where someone’s spending four hours trying to get from one place to another, reliability becomes a huge issue. Because if that bus, train, or whatever, is not available, frankly, they’re there for even a longer period of time.” – Water and land use group

“Families use transit to connect to jobs where, if bus was late and they had to call and say ‘I’m gonna be 20 minutes late.’ Then they’re out of a job now..... A bus coming every 30 minutes to an hour is connection, but it’s not a connection grounded in reality.” – TBI Equity Cohort

Theme: Several stakeholders would appreciate a Met Council study evaluating transit and transportation’s role in creating jobs and economic opportunity.

As part of the engagement process, SDK invited stakeholders and the Equity Cohort to review and comment on the variety of planned studies Met Council has named in the Policies + Actions drafts. A brief survey exercise during listening sessions asked stakeholders to prioritize the potential studies based on perceived importance to informing future transportation work. The top three studies were: 1) How to mitigate harms and displacement of underserved communities; 2) How transportation influences local economies; and 3) Supporting more efficient land use patterns. In addition, both stakeholders in listening sessions and those engaged in interviews offered comments on the questions and types of studies that they see as important to building the future practice of transportation. Compelling ideas are captured below and can help the Met Council build on and refine these studies. Comments regarding the study of how to mitigate harms and displacement of underserved communities are captured in Goal 1 (see p. 10).

“The potential studies that are most interesting to me are the economic impacts of [transportation] investments in really tangible ways. I know there are studies that exist that are like regional economic impacts, but how does transit enable job access and all these other important things that are meaningful regionally?” – Corridor coalition

“I think [Met Council] should have [a study or dashboard] on spending. They have the numbers. So for example, with folks who are applying to the regional solicitation project, at the end of the day, of the of the proposed projects, how many of

those were transit oriented? How many of those are focused on roadways? That kind of analysis on how Met Council is spending on these priorities is helpful to track over time.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

“How do current transportation options or ones under consideration help or hinder people in obtaining and keeping stable, affordable housing? We talk a lot about stability starts with home, but then what is the access to grocery store? What does it mean for access to work and livable wages? Better understanding the links between transportation and what it means for stable housing might be able to inform more of the work on both sides, not just implications data, but in housing planning or where referrals are made.” – Social service organization

“Something about site development for commercial industrial uses that create good paying jobs that leverage and utilize the transit system, create wealth, and especially communities of color but elsewhere. That would be one study I would love to see the Met Council pursue.” – Business organization

Theme: Some are attentive to moving freight and employees in the transportation plan.

Suburban and exurban stakeholders engaged highlighted the importance of freight traffic as a key element of the transportation system that they want to see continue through the next decade of transportation funding and policy. These stakeholders see maintaining freight and truck traffic as important for moving goods. Ensuring freight traffic moves safe and fast is seen as important for the region’s economy by these stakeholders.

“Here in the East Metro, there’s a lot of truck traffic. Frankly, trucks and cars don’t mix very well, during the day, whether you think so or not, they don’t. And we need to not only think of people transportation, but we need to consider goods, transportation, and how we can better manage that. Because, frankly, an 18-Wheeler is a difficult thing to negotiate. When they decide to change lanes, they do it when they feel like it because they’re bigger than everybody else. A person on a bicycle is going to lose.” – Water and land use group

“I’d like to try to emphasize the importance of commercial corridors that run through the north Metro, whether it’s highway 10, 252, 65,35, all of those major corridors, and encourage ease of transportation and safety. Some of the most dangerous intersections in the state are in these areas. Being able to provide that reliability of being able to move goods and people in and out of the region or through the region safely is something I think we need to continue to emphasize.” – Business group

“[Investing in a study] about site development for commercial industrial uses that create good paying jobs that leverage and utilize the transit system, create wealth, and especially communities of color but elsewhere. If I had to pick, that would be one [study to invest in].” – Business group

“Health and safety issues. It might be good to keep this as a separate bucket. But a workgroup to talk about terms of community vitality and economic development is frame I think might be useful.” – Climate-friendly transportation group

Theme: Business groups engaged will be seeking information and support from Met Council to help their members understand new transportation policies and investments.

Some business group representatives that participated in listening sessions highlighted the significant changes in the TPP Policies + Actions, as compared with the 2040 plan. These leaders believe that helping their members understand the TPP and what the future direction of transportation could mean for their work, businesses, employees and communities will be an important part of ensuring the plan’s ultimate success. At a very simple level, once the plan is finalized and ready for roll out, these participants will appreciate any information or material that the Met Council can provide to support broad understanding and support.

TBI Theme: Traveling to work, and driving for work, is very important to the livelihoods of low-income, people of color.

Engagement with TBI respondents in SDK’s Equity Cohort and additional data points illustrate the challenges of getting to and from work for low-income individuals and households.

- **Fewer than 1 in 4 can work from home.** Only 23% of TBI respondents in SDK’s Equity Cohort are allowed to work from home, compared with 42% of all TBI respondents in the metro region. For the Equity Cohort, travel and transportation is a requirement of work.
- **One in 6 TBI respondents have two or more jobs.** Getting from one job to another could be a time-consuming effort, depending on where the jobs are located (and given that most jobs require in person attendance). This reality makes the multiple jobs even harder to navigate. On the other hand, only 11% of the full RSG dataset reported having more than one job.

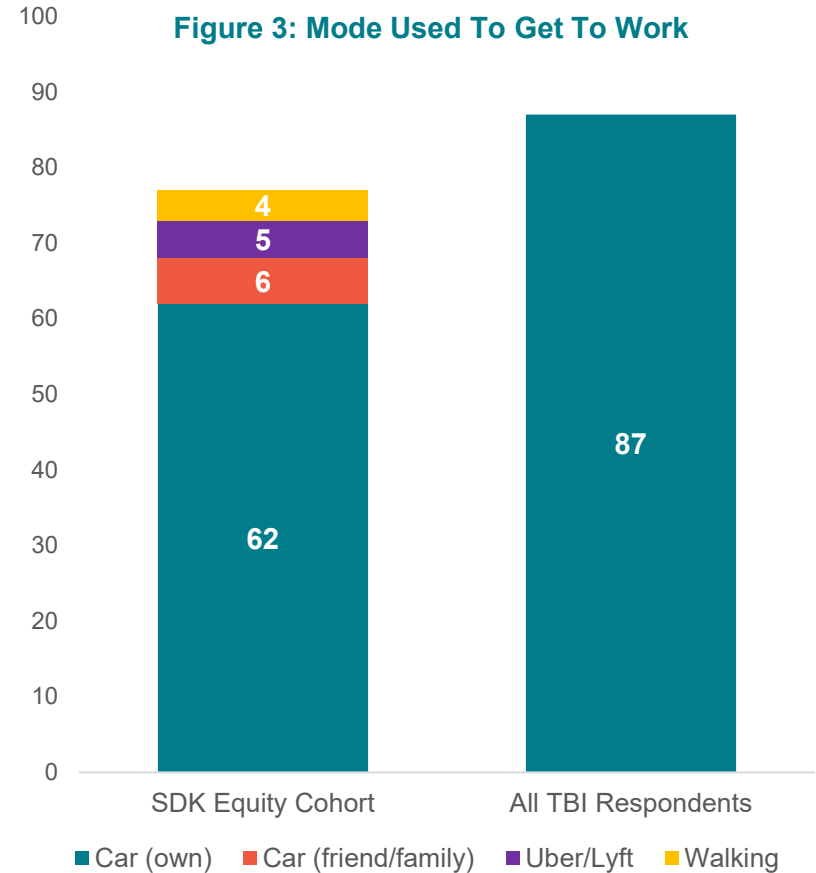
TBI Theme: The Opportunity Costs of transit also weigh on respondents.

Stakeholder interviews and conversations with people taking the TBI, as well as SDK’s Equity Cohort, all revealed a consistent theme: taking transit takes a significant amount of time for many, and the opportunity costs of getting to and from jobs, grocery stores, and more are even higher. For example:

- **Long Commutes.** The average one-way trip for transit users who participated in the TBI is 1 hour and 12 minutes, from departure to destination. This is slightly longer than the average trip length for all people who participated in the Equity Cohort of the TBI is 54 minutes, or just under an hour.
- **Regular Transit Use.** TBI participants engaged through the SDK Equity Cohort rely on transit somewhat regularly to fulfill at least part of their transportation needs. A full 35% of these participants take transit at least once per week, compared with only 7% of people reflected in the full RSG dataset.

TBI Theme: Cars – Owned and Others’ – are the most common mode to get to work.

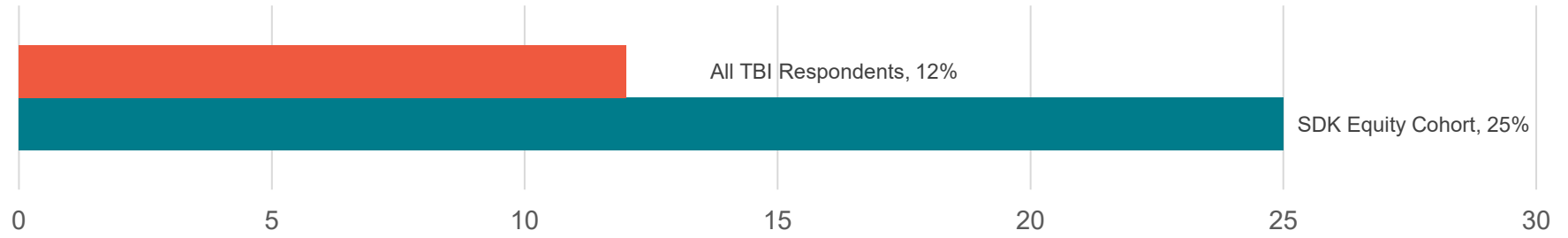
People who completed the TBI as part of SDK’s Equity Cohort rely on cars to get to work, even though their cars are older and less reliable. Specifically, 62% of the Equity Cohort respondents said they used a household car to get to work, compared with 87% of RSG’s total respondents. The other modes people rely on show how people who don’t have a car, or don’t have a car that’s working, get to work. Instead, Equity Cohort respondents get a ride from a friend or family member (6%), take an Uber, Lyft or similar service (5%) or walk (4%). More than 20% rely on transit to get to work.



TBI Theme: Low-income, BIPOC respondents rely on each other to get around.

Equity Cohort respondents’ reported travel modes for work affirm another noteworthy observation in the TBI data and affirmed in conversations with respondents: Low-income individuals and people of color rely on friends, families and networks to get where they need to go. Specifically, 25% of Equity Cohort trips reported had 1 or more non-household passengers with them, compared with only 12% of trips for RSG’s total respondent pool.

Figure 4: Percent of trips with non-household passengers



Conclusions

- 1. The metro region is in the midst of unprecedented change. Plans like the TPP are an important tool to seeding the future direction.** Post-pandemic, people are settling into new directions on everything from where to live to when to work from home. Delivery services, technology advances and more are impacting communities at an unprecedented speed. And yet a substantial portion of the metro region – and especially BIPOC community members in the metro region – do not have the transportation, connectivity, or other resources to keep up with that pace of change. The Met Council is in a unique position, as it writes its preliminary regional plan and TPP following the pandemic and these technology leaps, to chart new and compelling strategies to help the region thrive in this new era.
- 2. Transportation places significant cost, time burdens on low-income individuals, and often BIPOC community members, in the metro region. These burdens have become even more disproportionately felt post-pandemic.** TBI data shows that almost 60% of monthly income goes toward housing and transportation costs, alone, among people in the SDK Equity Cohort. Only 23% of SDK respondents have an option to work from home (compared with more than 40% of RSG respondents). Getting to work on transit is taking respondents an hour or more each way, and 15% of people are relying on friends and family, Uber, or simply walking because transit and a personal car are not practical options for them to get to work. This is an experience that is likely different from pre-pandemic and is worth elevating.
- 3. The housing and transportation connection is pervasive in how stakeholders see, and people experience, transportation.** The connection of housing and transportation is especially acute for low-income individuals and BIPOC community members, as data from SDK's Equity Cohort of the TBI and stories shared through engagement illustrate, and engagement with both community members and stakeholders affirmed.
- 4. Balancing the economic and time realities of current transportation modes with the shifts needed to achieve climate goals is a central challenge that will require ongoing attention in implementation.** Ultimately, the metro region will embark on this next leg of addressing climate change from a place of significant racial, economic, and other inequities. Achieving both equity and addressing climate change simultaneously will require changes from many. These are changes that infrastructure alone could not solve.
- 5. Stakeholders want to see Metro Transit embrace stations' role as anchor spaces in the public realm and facilitate proactive approaches to enhancing safety.** Amenities improvements proposed are a good start. Flexibility, collaboration and engagement at the station-level or stop-level is also important to ensure that the businesses, residents, and gathering spaces around transit stops contribute to vibrant neighborhoods.

6. **Policies + Actions, if fully implemented, will require significant attention to communication and engagement beyond government and across topical sectors (e.g. housing, transportation, business, etc.).** Many of the ideas and approaches proposed – from reducing vehicle miles traveled, to increasing walking, biking and transit use – will require strategic communication with local governments, businesses, and underserved communities, to spark the behavior changes that will maximize infrastructure changes and improvements.
7. **Interagency coordination has a deep impact on how people experience and perceive transportation.** From construction sites, to managing encampments of the unhoused, to setting future road design decisions, where and how Met Council coordinates with other cities, counties and the state has a tangible impact on how people experience and perceive transportation. Stakeholder feedback shows a clear understanding of the impact of effective coordination, and includes consistent questions about how non-governmental stakeholders can best engage on these topics.
8. **Internet connectivity – and digital inequity – influences transportation and resource accessibility in significant ways that were not true in the 2040 plan but will drastically impact the metro region over the next decade.** More than 40% of the RSG participants in the TBI can work from home at least some of the time, compared with only 23% of SDK's Equity Cohort. Other SDK studies have taught us the complex causes and drastic consequences of digital inequity broadly, and the TBI has shown that communities being underserved by transportation are also being underserved in economic opportunities that don't require transportation to sustain a job. This is an unexplored area with significant consequences that merits further investigation.

Recommendations

- 1. Maintain most Policies + Actions detailed in the current plan, but clearly name 1 to 3 action priorities for focused effort.** The sheer volume and scope of the TPP's Policies + Actions, and especially in the context of the larger regional comprehensive plan and other changes underway, mean that maintaining the focus needed for momentum will be difficult. As a regional government, Met Council must serve all interests to a basic floor of services. In addition, we are recommending that Met Council identify 1 to 3 action priorities where it hopes to make the biggest, lasting impact towards its vision. A host of Policies + Actions can be framed to support these action priorities, but the focused vision and action-oriented approach – if consistently communicated well -- can add understanding and momentum to the Council's efforts.
- 2. Lean into changes underway, and harness Met Council's planning and convening roles to proactively shape the public sector's contributions to regional, equitable prosperity.** Ultimately, many of the approaches proposed in the TPP and across plans will require new approaches to new problems. If taken as a series of segmented actions, the cumulative change could make success on any front challenging. The Met Council is uniquely positioned to model effective collaboration in pursuit of the overall regional plan, and to effectively elevate the ways transportation contributes to an equitable, prosperous region. Consider dedicating resources to support framing and elevating the vision for the region as a catalytic tool for all sectors and look for opportunities to frame and shape the lessons of this planning work to spark broader action. Met Council's success in promoting its lessons in COVID monitoring, tree cover, and other topics illustrate the Met Council's strong potential in this area.
- 3. Investigate the impact of digital technology – including working from home patterns and digital inequity – on the region's future.** Internet connectivity is not part of the transportation policy plan, and yet how people access the internet (or don't) post-pandemic is creating significant and diverging shifts in who and how people move throughout the Twin Cities. Consider dedicating resources to fully understanding the topic of connectivity and how it relates to the Council's transportation and regional planning capacities, and helping the region as a whole grapple with this emerging form of connection and communication that has changed (and is continuing to change) where and how people move, work, shop and more. Potential steps could include:
 - a. Conduct a review of potential impacts of connectivity on current Met Council roles, plans and resources around transportation, land use, and regional prosperity.
 - b. Articulate a clear vision and role for how digital connectivity factors into regional planning and resource allocation.
 - c. Identify what, if any, role digital equity and connectivity should have in informing future planning in transportation, housing (including multi-unit), economic development, and other infrastructure.

4. **Look for added opportunities to elevate the experiences of underserved communities, and especially BIPOC communities and people with disabilities, in planning and resource allocation conversations.** The Met Council’s decision to emphasize equity engagement in the Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) should be lauded, and preliminary results speak to the distinct ways transportation impacts the lives of underserved communities. Where possible, elevate these lessons to help inform future actions of others.

5. **Embrace and invest in change.** Public health campaigns regularly lead public information and public education campaigns aimed at encouraging different behaviors that produce population-level health improvements in complement to the health care system’s ability to deliver care for sickness. Similarly, there is an opportunity to build similar capacity in the transportation-adjacent fields. Early action items to make progress on this recommendation could include:
 - a. **Conduct an evaluation** of Met Council’s communications and engagement capacities (time/FTEs, knowledge, skills, abilities, and organizational placement) against the potential capacities needed to successfully implement the TPP to fully understand the resources needed to achieve the Council’s vision for the region.
 - b. **Develop a strategic plan** for expanding and elevating communications and engagement capacities to the level needed for success.
 - c. **Conduct skills and capacity trainings, learning cohorts, and other programs** to help various Met Council and metro region a public sector technical experts understand the potential skills, contributions, and best ways to engage communications and engagement staff as leadership partners to achieving TPP and other regional outcomes.
 - d. **Review and assess Met Council’s models for facilitating or participating in interagency and cross-topical coordination** (e.g. environmental services and transportation planning and housing) to understand current best practices, emerging practice needs, and capacity needs for effective collaboration.