Minutes

Equity Advisory Committee

Meeting date: March 15, 2025   **Time**: 6:00 PM   **Location:** 390 Robert Street

Members present:

- ☒ Co-Chair, John Pacheco Jr., District 5
- ☒ Co-Chair, Vanessa Jenkins, District G
- ☒ Dr. Tyronne Carter, District 3
- ☐ Yassin Ossman, District 7
- ☐ Chai Lee, District 13
- ☒ Toni Carter, District 14
- ☒ Michael Luseni, District A
- ☐ Yahye Mohamed, District B

- ☒ Anita L. Urvina Davis, District C
- ☐ Samiira Isse, District D
- ☐ Zakariya Abdullahi, District E
- ☒ Brittany Clausen, District F
- ☒ Vanessa Jenkins, District G
- ☐ Vacant , District H
- ☐ Zabat Awed, at large

- ☐ Edward McDonald, at large
- ☐ Mercedes Yarbrough, at large
- ☐ Janine Lukes, at large
- ☒ Carmeann Foster, at large
- ☒ Mitchel Hansen, at large
- ☐ Melissa Favila, at large
- ☐ Kristen Stacey, at large
- ☒ = present, E = excused

Call to order
A quorum being present, Council Chair Pacheco called the regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda approved
It was moved by Council Chair Pacheco to approve the agenda. Committee Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried**.

Approval of minutes
It was moved by Dr. Tyronne Carter, seconded by Hansen to approve the minutes of the (date), 2024, regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation
No public comments were made.

Reports – Subcommittees
No subcommittee reports were made

Information
Highway System Harms, Impacts, and Mitigation Priorities Study by Bethany Brandt-Sargent, Planning Analyst, UPWP Projects and Amy Vennewitz, Director, Metro Transp. Plng, UPWP Projects

- Project Overview

- o Explore the history of regional highway impacts
- o Connect with people who were/are impacted
- o Determine opportunities to do better going forward
- o Advance understanding and support for change
- Project Objectives
  - o Gaining thorough understanding of issues and contributing factors → Organincing approach based on shared goals and agreements → Mapping immediate and longer-term steps to better solutions
- Study Approach
  - o 1 – Literature Review
  - o 2 - Harms Category Identification
  - o 3 - Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation of Each Harms Category
  - o 4 - Mitigation Toolbox
  - o 5 - Pilot Corridors to Test Toolbox
- Engagement Approach
  - o Internal
    - Project Management Team
    - Met Council's Committees, Presentations, and Conversations
  - o Technical and Research
    - Technical Advisory Committee
    - Highway Harms Policy Group
    - Research and Equity Panel
  - o External
    - Community Based Organization Outreach
    - Focus Group Discussions
    - Community Listening Sessions
    - Online Engagement Strategy
    - Inclusive Communication Methods

==Questions/Comments==

Urvina-Davis: When I look at this list and the nine icons, the one that stands out most is "Environment and Climate" because those are pressing issues. However, trust and accountability are even more critical.

I've been speaking with people about Highway 252 and the proposal to convert it into a freeway extension of I-94. A recent article featuring the mayor highlighted concerns about this, particularly regarding MnDOT's role. If MnDOT is a partner, that partnership reflects on the Met Council, and right now, people feel a deep sense of distrust. They believe their voices are not being heard— presentations lack meaningful feedback or accountability. There's no clear response of "We hear you, and here's what we're doing about your concerns." Without that, trust erodes, and eventually, people disengage, wondering why they should invest their time if their input is ignored.

Trust and accountability should be the top priority among these nine areas. Without them, nothing else will function effectively. Communities need to feel that their voices matter and that decision-makers are truly accountable. Too often, public meetings feel like a formality—decisions have

already been made, and input is just an afterthought. At that point, why ask for feedback at all? If it's a done deal, just be honest about it instead of pretending to listen.

Vennewitz: That's a great point. Trust and accountability, once lost, are incredibly difficult to rebuild, and asking for community feedback without genuine responsiveness only deepens that distrust. The findings from the *Transportation Needs in Daily Life* study highlight how critical this issue is. While measuring trust can be challenging, acknowledging it as a key outcome of the transportation system is an important step. Ensuring transparency and meaningful engagement will be essential in addressing these concerns. [MNDOT] are supportive of the initiative and open to its outcomes, which we see as a significant step forward. While they may not always know how to respond or adapt to feedback, this effort is designed, in part, to help guide that process.

Foster: I was wondering if this was modeled after other projects in the past?

Brandt-Sergeant: As far as we know, this is the first study of its kind. While we've based our approach on similar studies, this is our first major effort in qualitative engagement. We're very comfortable with quantitative analysis, which serves as the foundation of this study, but this work expands our approach to better capture community experiences.

Foster: You indicated your department is 80% federally funded, is it possible that it could go away?

Vennewitz: This project isn't going away—I can assure you of that. We have a consultant under contract, and as I mentioned at the start of the presentation, this work is centered on creating healthy and safe communities. While it focuses on communities adjacent to highways, we recognize that underrepresented and overburdened populations make up the majority of those areas, making this study relevant across the region.

We will identify corridors in all counties and assess the specific harms experienced by adjacent communities. While we may adjust how we present the study to our federal partners, we are confident it will continue moving forward and meet their expectations.

Hansen: I've researched the negative impacts of projects like this, particularly in Olson, where infrastructure changes displaced residents without delivering promised benefits. We're now in crisis mode—many can't afford to live there anymore.

These projects often harm adjacent communities, yet the voices most affected are already gone. Advocates and residents can speak, but those displaced are missing. Decision-makers stay ahead while neighborhoods struggle to catch up, addressing issues only after they've become crises.

I urge you to truly engage with communities—meet people where they are, listen beyond advisory committees, and share data transparently. What harms have you identified?

Brandt-Sergeant: Community-based organizations are our primary connection to those experiencing these harms, which is why we're focused on building a robust network. While our website is live, it currently has limited content since most of the work is still ahead. However, we will keep this committee updated on our findings and ensure our feedback loops and responses meet your expectations.

Urvina-Davis: Who will be creating the mitigation toolbox, and what are you looking to put in the toolbox?

Brant-Sergeant: The mitigation toolbox will outline responses to each identified harm, developed in collaboration with our technical advisory committee, which brings subject matter expertise in implementation. Meanwhile, the policy group will evaluate whether these mitigations adequately address community harms. The process will balance technical and legal feasibility with community needs, ensuring a well-rounded approach to mitigation.

Urvina-Davis: Will one of the tools be compensation?

Brant-Sergeant: Possibly, but that's a legal question we need to consider. The federal planning and investment dollars Amy mentioned come with restrictions on how they can be used. However, that doesn't mean we can't explore other funding sources to address this need**.**

Vennewitz: One of our goals is to identify mitigations without immediately limiting ourselves by budget constraints or uncertainty about who would implement them. The toolbox will outline potential solutions to the harms, with a later step focused on securing funding. Even if we don't have the money right away, those solutions will remain on the list, as highlighting them often helps generate the resources needed. The mitigation toolbox could include not just transportation-related actions, but also community compensation, economic development, job creation in impacted areas, and more. A wide variety of solutions will be explored.

Toni Carter: I'm also wondering if there will be a project website with updated information about the project—where it's been, where it's going, frequently asked questions, or something similar. It would be helpful to have a place where we can track the project according to its timeline. Additionally, since there's already community engagement happening in various ways, will there be a way for individuals to leave comments on the website for general engagement?

Finally, I wanted to ask: Although things may seem complete now, it's possible that later on, an organization or even someone reviewing a specific category might have additional feedback. Is there an email address where we can send feedback after this meeting? Essentially, I'm asking how people can stay updated on the project, track its progress, and share feedback if needed after today's meeting.

Vennewitz: I've sent our communications staff the initial web content for the website, but there's not much to share yet. However, we do anticipate offering online engagement opportunities that will link to the Council's website. Once we reach those stages, there will be opportunities for individuals, not just those associated with organizations, to participate.

Foster: I was wondering if public safety and damage to foundation fits into any of the harms categories?

Vennewitz: We've heard both sides of the public safety discussion through engagement in the Transportation Policy Plan and the Transportation Needs in Daily Life study. We have developed policies to address personal comfort in transportation facilities, including measures to address behavior on transit. The TPP also includes actions to improve policing on transit.

Additionally, addressing public safety was a key finding in the Transportation Needs in Daily Life study, and we've incorporated it where possible. For now, these issues fall under our "Healthy and Safe" goal. However, we may find that public safety deserves its own harm category, as we did in the study. For the time being, it's categorized under transportation and traffic safety.

In response to your question about the Blue Line, many of the mitigation strategies for train noise and vibrations are addressed through their existing processes. However, I understand that the issue in South Minneapolis was related to construction, which may not be something we can directly address through policy and investments. That said, while it was difficult to foresee, it is possible that similar issues could arise again in the future.

Co-Chair Selection Speech- Lead by current Co-Chairs , Council Member John Pacheco and Vanessa Jenkins

Carmeean Foster was selected as the new co-chair of the Equity Advisory Committee.

Announcements
No announcements were made.

Adjournment
Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM

Certification
I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the

Equity Advisory Committee meeting of March 18, 2025.

Approved this April 15, 2025.

Council contact:

Lila Eltawely, Equity Senior Manager
Lila.Eltawely@metc.state.mn.us
612-456-8095