

Project Selection & Equity

Learning from other MPOs

February 2, 2023

Equity Advisory Committee (EAC)



Puget Sound Regional Council

Questions for the Equity Advisory Committee

- What strategies from the other MPOs would you like to explore incorporating into the Pilot?
 - Why do you like the strategy?
 - What will it add to our process?



Today's Takeaways

- **MPOs across the country have adopted various approaches to weaving equity into the project selection process**
- **These approaches have been sorted into the five categories, with the equity impacts ranging across the five-group spectrum**
 - **PSRC is currently at the midpoint of this spectrum**
- **MPOs have incorporated community engagement into project selection in a few ways**



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study commissioned by the Metropolitan Planning Council in 2020
- Found roughly half of the largest 40 MPOs in the nation use equity-related criterion for project prioritization
- These generally accounted for 10% or less of the overall score



Equity-Oriented Performance Measures in Transportation Planning

By Audrey Wennink and Agustina Krapp

Transportation conditions have a significant impact on community residents' quality of life. Planners should be aware of how, where, and what types of transportation investments are being planned within their jurisdictions, because transportation is intimately connected to all facets of community planning, including land use, economic development, housing, and the environment.

Economic stability and wealth accrual are highly related to one's ability to access employment and services via transportation. Most of America's communities have been developed so that housing is located a significant distance from jobs, stores, and medical care, meaning that transportation needs to cover long distances and most destinations are accessible only by car. Federal and state policies have prioritized investment in auto-oriented transportation for decades.

As a result, people of color and those with lower incomes, who are less likely to own cars and may not live in areas well served by transit, experience worse transportation outcomes, often having to travel farther and experience more difficult trips to access employment and other critical needs. The National Bureau of Economic Research has shown that long commute times play a significant role in predicting residents' upward mobility (Chetty et al. 2014).

As an example, in the greater Chicago region, communities where black residents are the largest racial group experience the longest commute times. Chicago consistently ranks among America's most segregated regions. As in many U.S. metropolitan areas, historical and ongoing systemic racism has blurred the lines between racial and economic segregation; today, Chicago's poorest residents are disproportionately people of color living in communities of concentrated poverty.

As shown in Figure 1, of the 100 census tracts in the Chicago region with the longest commutes (shown in red), with an average of 44 minutes each way, 95 are majority black or Latinx. The median income for those 95 tracts is \$31,667. By comparison, 53 of the 100 tracts with the shortest commutes

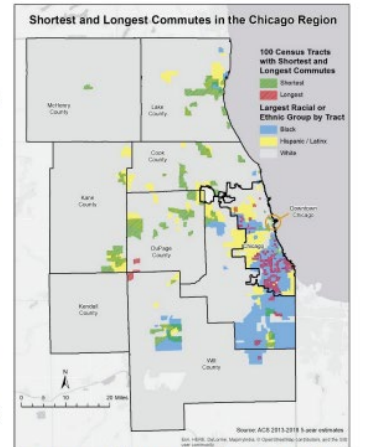


Figure 1. Longest and shortest commutes by census tract in the Chicago region (U.S. Census Bureau 2013–2017, ACS 5-Year Estimates, map by the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council).

(shown in green), averaging only 23 minutes, are majority white. The median annual household income for those 53 tracts is over \$75,000.



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion
 - 1. Location Burdens-Based
 - 2. Location Benefits-Based
 - 3. Impact Benefits-Based
 - 4. Access to Destinations-Based
 - 5. User-Based



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion
 - 1. Location Burdens-Based



Location Burdens-Based

- **Awards points if projects are not located within areas with high concentrations of marginalized populations, or if measures to mitigate harm are integrated**
- Acknowledges potential negative impacts of projects, especially in areas with a high marginalized population



Location Burdens-Based

- **Example: Houston-Galveston Area Council**
- **Awards 10 points if project is not located in or near an Environmental Justice area, or if it incorporates mitigation measures**



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion

- 2. Location Benefits-Based



Location Benefits-Based

- **Awards points if projects are located within areas with high concentrations marginalized populations**
- Acknowledges potential benefits of transportation projects physically proximate to marginalized populations – but assumes benefits



Location Benefits-Based

- **Example: East-West Gateway Council of Governments (St. Louis)**
- **Awards points if project is in an area with high concentration of:**
 - Low-income persons or minorities (4 pts)
 - Zero vehicle households (3 pts)
 - Seniors/people with a disability (1 pt)
 - Not in Environmental Justice area or imposes a burden (0 pts)



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion

- 3. Impact Benefits-Based



Impact Benefits-Based

- **Awards more points to projects that will provide benefits (besides geographic proximity) to areas with high concentrations of marginalized populations.**
- **Assesses the positive effects of a project instead of assuming them, i.e.,**
 - Traffic safety
 - Improved pedestrian, transit, bicycle or vehicle network connectivity
 - Reduction in noise, emissions
 - Community cohesion/mitigates impacts



Impact Benefits-Based

- **Example: New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority**
- **Scoring Criteria includes the question:**
 - Does the project provide benefits or reduce burdens to disadvantaged and underserved communities?



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion

- 4. Access to Destinations-Based



Access to Destinations-Based

- **Awards more points to projects that will provide greater increases in access to key destinations for areas with high concentrations of marginalized populations**
- Acknowledges access to key destinations as the most important benefit of transportation systems



Access to Destinations-Based

- **Example: Atlanta Regional Commission**
- **Awards points for an increase in number of low income and minority workers that can access job centers during peak period via transit**



MPO Alternative Approaches

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion



- 5. User-Based



User-Based

- Considers the number of users of the proposed project that *will belong* to the population defined as marginalized and awards more points to projects with more marginalized users.
 - This approach focuses on increased access for *people in the future*
 - Other approaches are based on current populations



User-Based

- **Example: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning**
- **Percent of travelers using a facility that are people of color below the poverty line, as modeled by CMAP's travel demand model. Scoring weighted as follows:**

- 0% - 5% of travelers = 0% of total score
- 5% - 10% of travelers = 1.6% of total score
- 10% - 15% of travelers = 3.2% of total score
- 15% - 20% of travelers = 4.8% of total score
- 20% - 25% of travelers = 6.4% of total score
- 25% or more = 8% of total score



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning



Scoring Community Engagement

- Found two main approaches to scoring Community Engagement
 - 1. Points based on influence of public participation on every stage of project development from planning to implementation
 - 2. Sponsors describe engagement methods and tools used, generally explaining the influence of community feedback on projects

Community Engagement
Considerations



Scoring Community Engagement

- **Approach One: Points based on influence of public participation on stages of project development**
- **Example: Mid-American Regional Council**
- **Scoring Criteria includes the prompt:**
 - Applicants should illustrate how the community was involved in the design, implementation, and management of the proposed service. A project with strong levels of public involvement in the design, implementation and management of the service requesting funding will be rated higher than projects that only identify a service population, service area and hours of service.



Scoring Community Engagement

- **Approach Two: Sponsors describe engagement methods and influence of community feedback on projects**
- **Example: Metropolitan Council**
- **Scoring Criteria includes the prompt:**
 - Describe what engagement methods and tools were used and how the input is reflected in the project's purpose and need and design.



PSRCs Current Approach

- Study found five main categories of equity-related criterion

- 3. Impact Benefits-Based



Impact Benefits-Based

- **Awards more points to projects that will provide benefits (besides geographic proximity) to areas with high concentrations of marginalized populations.**
- **Example: Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)**
- **Awards points if project :**
 - Identifies the population groups to be served by the project
 - people of color, people with low-income...
 - Identifies the disparities or gaps for these population groups
 - Describes how the project addresses those disparities or gaps



Scoring Community Engagement

- **Awards more points for projects influenced by community feedback.**
- **Example: Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)**
- **Scoring Criteria includes the prompt:**
 - Describe the public outreach process that led to the development of the project. Include specific outreach or communication with the population groups identified in the previous section.
 - Describe how this outreach influenced the development of the project, e.g., the location, scope, design, timing, etc.



New Equity Pilot-Proposed Schedule

Phase One: Evaluating and Understanding 2022 Project Selection

- January 2023 – Introduction to PSRC's federal funds and project selection process
- February 2023 – Learn from other MPOs
- March 2023 – Further details into the equity criteria, scoring process



New Equity Pilot-Proposed Schedule

Phase Two: Designing Pilot

- April to May 2023 – Identification of needs and gaps, begin development of the equity pilot
- June to August 2023 – Design pilot program
- September to October 2023 – Pilot program conducted

Phase Three: Informing Future of PSRC's Project Selection Process

- November to December 2023 – Review of process and discuss recommendations for next funding process



Poll Questions



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Thank you

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