

DIVISION OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION & SYSTEM INFORMATION

Research Initial Scope of Work SUBMITTAL FORM - FY 2022/23

- I. **Project Number: 1725**
Project Title: Reconnecting Communities Research

- II. **Task Number: 4146**
Task Title: Reconnecting Communities Research

- III. **Project Problem Statement:** More research is needed on determining best practices for addressing systemic racial inequities in the public transportation sector for California communities. Considering the legacy of harm that has been caused by our infrastructure, and in alignment with the Caltrans multi-year effort to address systemic inequities, the Caltrans Office of Race and Equity (CORE) has been charged with advancing racial equity throughout the Department's internal and external operations. This research would directly inform CORE's ability to provide leadership and guidance to all divisions, districts, and programs, and more deliberately advance the commitments identified in the Caltrans Equity Statement. As written, Caltrans intends to "reform our programs, policies, and procedures based on this engagement to avoid harm to frontline and vulnerable communities," and has promised to "prioritize projects that improve access for and provide meaningful benefits to underserved communities."

- IV. **Objective:** The overall objective of this research will be to inform procedures and policies that will support and prioritize the sale/release of surplus land to Tribal Governments/Communities and communities and or individuals that have been impacted by the state for transportation development. In addition to reallocating land, other equitable outcomes could be achieved through programs or policies that support access for priority populations to economic resources and amenities on public land such as land trusts, greenspace, public charging stations, the expansion of high-speed internet, mitigating environmental hazards, and access to employment in sectors that build and maintain the state's infrastructure.

- V. **Task Description of Work and Expected Deliverables:** Develop Several scenarios for an equity/transformational justice-based policy to release/relinquish surplus land and provide other direct and meaningful benefits from state land relinquishment or transportation project development for priority populations. Work with Caltrans staff and other State agency staff on an inventory of Caltrans' surplus land and potential surplus land documentation. Develop and or recommend performance measures to determine the impact of each policy scenario to benefit priority populations.

- VI. **Background:** This research effort and eventual outcomes are supported by Governor Newsom's California Assembly Bill (AB) 3121, which recently established the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a special consideration for African Americans who are

descendants of persons enslaved in the United States. Additionally, legislation passed in July 2021 allowing Tribal communities a right to procure excess land similar to that of local governments. AB 1180 (Mathis) would add to the definition of “exempt surplus land” to include land transferred by a local agency to a federally recognized California Indian Tribe. These statewide initiatives and legislation point to the significance and timeliness of this ongoing work at the state level. By conducting research on reparations, Caltrans will be better positioned as a leader in California’s pursuit of racial justice and transportation equity.

In addition, the research aligns with Goal 6 of the strategic plan: Advance equity and livability in all communities. Among the strategies that support this goal, this research would ensure that transportation-related disparities in underserved communities are addressed or minimized on new projects that involve Caltrans right of way, land back efforts would support vibrant livable places with a focus on addressing the needs and concerns of underserved communities, and it would advance collaboration with partner agencies to make equity and inclusion central in funding decisions

VII. Estimate of Duration: 12-18 months

VIII. Related Research: The National Cooperative Highway Research Program is currently developing a “Handbook for Addressing Racial Disparities in the Project Delivery Process”, which will assist state DOTs and local governments to help interpret and implement relevant regulations and policies that avoid racial disparities in project delivery and support the use of cooperative approaches to mitigate adverse impacts.

Ongoing Caltrans Freeway Siting research through UCLA maybe be of interest (<https://rip.trb.org/view/1753522>).

In addition, an addendum to the Transportation Research Board’s “Critical Issues in Transportation 2019” probes transportation’s role in contributing to (and redressing) racial discrimination and identifies areas of research to inform equity-enhancing public policies.

Take into consideration the report(s) from the Assembly Bill 3121 enacting the establishment of a Task Force to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans.

IX. Deployment Potential: This research fits under the wider breadth of state research to support Governor Newsom’s California Assembly Bill (AB) 3121, and AB 1180 (Mathis). Research deployment and implementation will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders within Caltrans, CTC, CalSTA and other state partners (Housing, Public Health, Energy Commission, Parks and Rec, etc.), Tribal Sovereign Nations, and California recognized Tribal communities.