Assessing the Impact of Equity Work in Active and Sustainable Transportation

A qualitative analysis of current and emerging equity work in sustainable and active transportation by using a combination of semi-structured interviews and ethnographic methods.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

There is an increasing level of awareness of the role transportation systems have played in racial segregation and the disempowerment of low-income communities and communities of color. As cities have once again become more attractive to developers and more privileged populations, these communities have become the target of gentrification that now displaces the residents who have long been struggling to bring life and vitality to streets long neglected.

Transportation infrastructure, particularly related to active transportation, is sometimes seen as a handmaid to gentrification and displacement. Numerous efforts have been made to address these deep issues of injustice through the inclusion of equity and community participation within projects on active and sustainable transportation. New transportation projects seek to engage longtime residents in the planning and implementation process.

Research on equity within transportation advocacy and professional spaces is emerging. Cities and planning firms have begun to hire experts in equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as change their recruiting tactics to hire more people of color. More work must be done to assess the overall impact of this work.
WHAT ARE WE DOING?

This project will engage in a qualitative analysis of current and emerging equity work in sustainable and active transportation by using a combination of semi-structured interviews and ethnographic methods. Interviews will be conducted with 50 professionals working in active or sustainable transportation who also identify as Black, Indigenous, or as a Person of Color.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goals of this project are to:

1. Identify key areas of strength and areas for improvement in equity work in active and sustainable transportation emphasizing biking, shared mobility, and automated vehicles;
2. Examine the inclusion of disadvantaged communities in the planning, policymaking, and implementation of new active and sustainable mobilities; and
3. Provide recommendations for how to enhance equity work in active and sustainable transportation.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

This project will help to improve the mobility of people throughout California by identifying ways to improve mobility for disadvantaged populations. Black, indigenous, and other communities of color (Latinos, Asian-Americans, migrants and refugees) have suffered systemic disadvantage historically, which has limited their mobility and access to resources including jobs, educational opportunities, public resources, and leisure opportunities.

This project will broaden the understanding of the successes and shortcomings of current equity work designed to assist disadvantaged populations, while also identifying new tactics and strategies to improve mobility and accessibility in a rapidly changing transportation landscape.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

Due to ongoing constraints from COVID-19, we are not experiencing the same robust response in the second round of interviews and expect that there will be delays in completing the interviews. A no-cost time extension to March 31, 2021 has been submitted and approved.

Interview coding is in process and about 30% complete. Through January, coding will continue and report draft will be completed. Final report will be ready in March.

In the next quarter, we plan to:

• Finish coding
• Analyze data
• Finalize findings
• Finalize draft report

Complete List of Tasks

Task 1: Prepare for interviews
Task 2: Norm interview process and identify/recruit more participants
Task 3: Conduct interviews
Task 4: Transcribe interviews
Task 5: Code interviews
Task 6: Draft initial findings
Task 7: Draft final report
Task 8: Complete Final Report

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