



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

Transportation Equity Workgroup

AGENDA

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

12:00-1:00pm

Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89339933087?pwd=VExFN1ViZWRYeS94eU5wVDc1cWhoUT09>

Meeting ID: 893 3993 3087

Passcode: 645127

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1. Introductions and Roster
2. Transportation equity communities metrics (*continued*)
 - a. Staff memorandum
 - b. Examples of potential metrics – *Workgroup members can mark-up the online google document with suggestions and questions* **Action: Provide input on what metrics should be used to identify communities and individuals more likely to be facing barriers due to historic or systemic inequities where transportation funding and outreach should be focused.**
3. Future meetings schedule and topics
4. Google Drive and Meeting Notes

Adjourn

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AGENDA: January 23, 2024

TO: Transportation Equity Workgroup
FROM: Rachel Moriconi, Transportation Planner
REGARDING: Transportation equity communities metrics (*continued from prior meetings*)

RECOMMENDATION

Provide input on what metrics should be used to identify communities and individuals more likely to be experiencing inequities, which will be used to inform where transportation funding, outreach, and efforts should be focused.

Introduction

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is working to advance equity through careful consideration of investments and policies that affect historically marginalized and systemically underserved groups and individuals. Investments in transportation can determine the choices that are available and how we travel. People living in some areas may be disproportionately limited by the transportation choices available to them based on historic and institutional inequities.

The RTC is working on updating regional definitions and metrics used by the RTC and transportation partners in Santa Cruz County.

Potential Metrics

What metrics should be used to identify communities and individuals more likely to be experiencing inequities?

Demographic factors (or metrics) have been used by state, federal, and local agencies as screening tools to prioritize projects, evaluate investments, and set policy. Unfortunately, metrics used by the state and federal agencies often exclude many individuals and communities that experience inequities in Santa Cruz County and the RTC is seeking input on what criteria to use in future transportation planning, project prioritization, and investment decisions. This could include prioritization of funding transportation in certain areas, such as new bike facilities, pedestrian sidewalks and paths, transit

service and amenities, road repairs, trails and parks, clean vehicle (EV and electric bike) initiatives and subsidy programs, K-12 safety education programs, carpool programs. It would also be used to determine where engagement activities should be focused – e.g., areas where more meetings, workshops, and other outreach is done.

A list of some metrics that have been used by transportation agencies and others to identify areas where additional outreach should be done, investments made, and policies focused for transportation projects and plans is online. This shared document includes input from workgroup members. Some of these metrics may be more appropriate to use to address transportation inequities and prioritize investments. Notably, data limitations do exist and, in some instances, the most feasible metrics to use may be those where data is more readily available and more regularly updated.

Maps of areas in Santa Cruz County that met various definitions of “transportation disadvantaged” are online at: <https://arcg.is/1DG9HK1>.

Next Steps

Staff will synthesize and share Equity Workgroup feedback and recommendations for new terminology and metrics with other stakeholders, the public, and the RTC board for use in various planning efforts and funding decisions.

SUMMARY

Staff is seeking guidance from the Transportation Equity Workgroup on metrics to use for identifying areas and individuals living or working in Santa Cruz County who have been overburdened and/or underserved where transportation resources should be focused.

What metrics should be used to identify communities and individuals more likely to be facing barriers due to historic or systemic inequities and racism where additional transportation funding, outreach, and planning work should be focused?

Potential demographic factors

Demographic factors (or metrics) have been used by state, federal, and local agencies as screening tools to prioritize projects, evaluate investments, and set policy. Unfortunately, metrics used by the state and federal agencies have historically excluded many individuals and communities that experience inequities in Santa Cruz County and the RTC is seeking input on what criteria to use in future transportation planning efforts. This could include prioritization of funding transportation in certain areas and also would be used to identify where additional equity-centered engagement activities should be focused – e.g., areas where more meetings, workshops, and other outreach is done.

The following is a partial list of some metrics that have been used by transportation agencies and others to identify areas where additional outreach should be done, investments made, and policies focused for transportation projects and plans. Some of these metrics may be more appropriate to use to address transportation inequities and prioritize investments. Notably, data limitations do exist and, in some instances, the most feasible metrics to use may be those where data is more readily available and more regularly updated.

NEW: Maps showing areas identified by various local, state and federal programs as priority focus areas are available here <https://arcg.is/1DG9HK1>

2045 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Metrics Used *(RTP maps from 2022 at end of this document)*

- **People of Color:** greater than 65% of the total population is non-white, mixed-race, or Hispanic, Latino, Latinx or Latine (“minority areas”); and/or
- **Low Income:**
 - Low-Income: greater than 33% of residing families earn less than 200% of the federal poverty level
 - Poverty-Level: greater than 25% of households earned less than the federal poverty level; and/or
- **Low community engagement areas:**
 - Linguistic Isolation/Limited English Proficiency: 15% or more of households where English is not spoken “very well” and/or
 - 15% or more of the population is over 25 without a high school diploma

- **Low mobility:**
 - 15% over age 65 and income below poverty level
 - 5% or more of households who do not own a vehicle (zero-car ownership)
 - More than 11.35% people with disabilities
- **Other factors** - Areas with high concentrations of:
 - Youth
 - Seniors over 70

Potential characteristics to use instead or in addition to above

- Income:
 - Income at or below 80% of the statewide median income or at or below the most recent (2022) county limit set by CA Housing and Comm Development
 - % of pop aged 25-64 who are unemployed
 - Areas with high concentration of low-wage jobs – farmworkers, service industry, etc
 - High concentration of migrant or undocumented residents or workers
- Housing:
 - Areas with high concentrations of unhoused individuals
 - Renters: Proportion of occupied housing units not occupied by property owners (excluding 2nd homes)
 - Percentage of low-income renter households paying more than 50% of income on housing
 - Overall cost and percent of income spent on housing compared to average countywide (Percentage of low-income homeowners paying more than 50% of income on housing)
 - Percentage of households with more than 1 occupant per room
 - Percent of households without complete kitchen facilities and plumbing
 - Population density
 - Single-parent household
 - Percent of population under age 16
- Percentage of people with disabilities
- Percentage of people over age 80 (or 75)
- Low engagement:
 - Percentage of registered voters that voted in 2020 general election
 - Percentage of population that responded to the 2020 Census
 - Percentage of households with no computing device available
- Education:
 - Percent of 15-17 year olds enrolled in school

- o Percent of 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in preschool
- o Percent of pre-K-12 attending Title 1 schools. By factoring Title I schools in the metrics we're more likely to target a population experiencing inequities in Santa Cruz County. Title I schools typically serve a higher percentage of students from low-income families, and the inclusion of such schools in metrics can help pinpoint areas where there might be disparities in access to resources and opportunities. Some work has already been done in Watsonville regarding schools (most of them Title 1) and safety. See: <https://www.watsonville.gov/1715/Complete-Streets-Plan-Safe-Routes-to-Sch>
- Healthcare Access:
 - o Asthma/Cardiovascular Disease/Low Birth Weight
 - o Insurance: Percentage of adults aged 18 to 64 years currently uninsured
 - o Percentage of adults aged 18 to 64 years with access to Medical
 - o Percentage of children under 18 with access to Medical
 - o Percentage of the population living within 5 miles of a healthcare facility
- Neighborhood characteristics:
 - o Percentage of the population living within ½ -mile of a park, beach, or open space greater than 1 acre
 - o Population-weighted percentage of the census tract area with tree canopy
 - o Percentage of the population residing within ¼ mile of an off-site sales alcohol outlet
 - o Percentage of the urban and small-town population residing less than 1/2 mile from a supermarket/large grocery store, and the percent of the rural population living less than 1 miles from a supermarket/large grocery store
 - o Combined employment density for retail, entertainment, supermarkets, and educational uses (jobs/acre)
- Climate Vulnerability/Hazards-Risk to extreme weather – flooding, fire, excessive heat, etc
- Cultural Resources: Identifying areas with limited access to cultural resources (libraries, concert hall, etc)
- Digital divide: access to wifi

Transportation-specific criteria

- Percentage of households with access to an automobile

- Percent of total population with a drive time to employment greater than 30 minutes
- Percentage of workers (16 years and older) commuting by walking, cycling, or transit (excluding working from home)
- Percentage of roadways in fair/poor condition
- Transit routes and frequency; distance to transit stop less than a 5 min walk
- Walkability - Concentration of sidewalks, lighting, street trees
- Bike facilities – none, lanes, buffered lanes, separated paths, etc
- Crash exposure and rates
- Transportation burden: Percent of household income spent on transportation
- Traffic exposure
 - Traffic volumes and location relative to freeways and major roadways (highways and arterials)
 - Truck/diesel vehicles volumes
 - Air pollution – Diesel particulate matter levels, concentration of ozone, PM2.5, PM10, NOx, Vox, etc
 - Toxics cancer risk
 - Annual average spatial distribution of gridded diesel PM emissions from on-road and non-road sources (tons/year)
 - Mean of summer months (May-October) of the daily maximum 8-hour ozone concentration (ppm), averaged over three years (2017 to 2019)

Sample Data Sources

- *U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS)*
- *U.S. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov>*
- *Caltrans Transportation Equity Index (EQI): <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/esta/race-equity/eqi>*
- *CalEnviroScreen: <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen>*
- *California Healthy Places Index: <https://www.healthyplacesindex.org/>*
- *Center for Disease Control. Social Vulnerability Index (SVI): <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>*
- *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:*
 - *Smart Location Database: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-location-mapping>*
 - *EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool - <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>*
- *U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency. National Risk Index: <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/>*
- *HUD Exchange Location Affordability Index*

- *FEMA Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (GINI Index);*
www.FEMA.gov/RAPT

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Areas in Santa Cruz County that met the definition of “transportation disadvantaged” used by the RTC and Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) in the 2045 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

2045 RTP: Minority, Low Income and Poverty Areas in Santa Cruz County

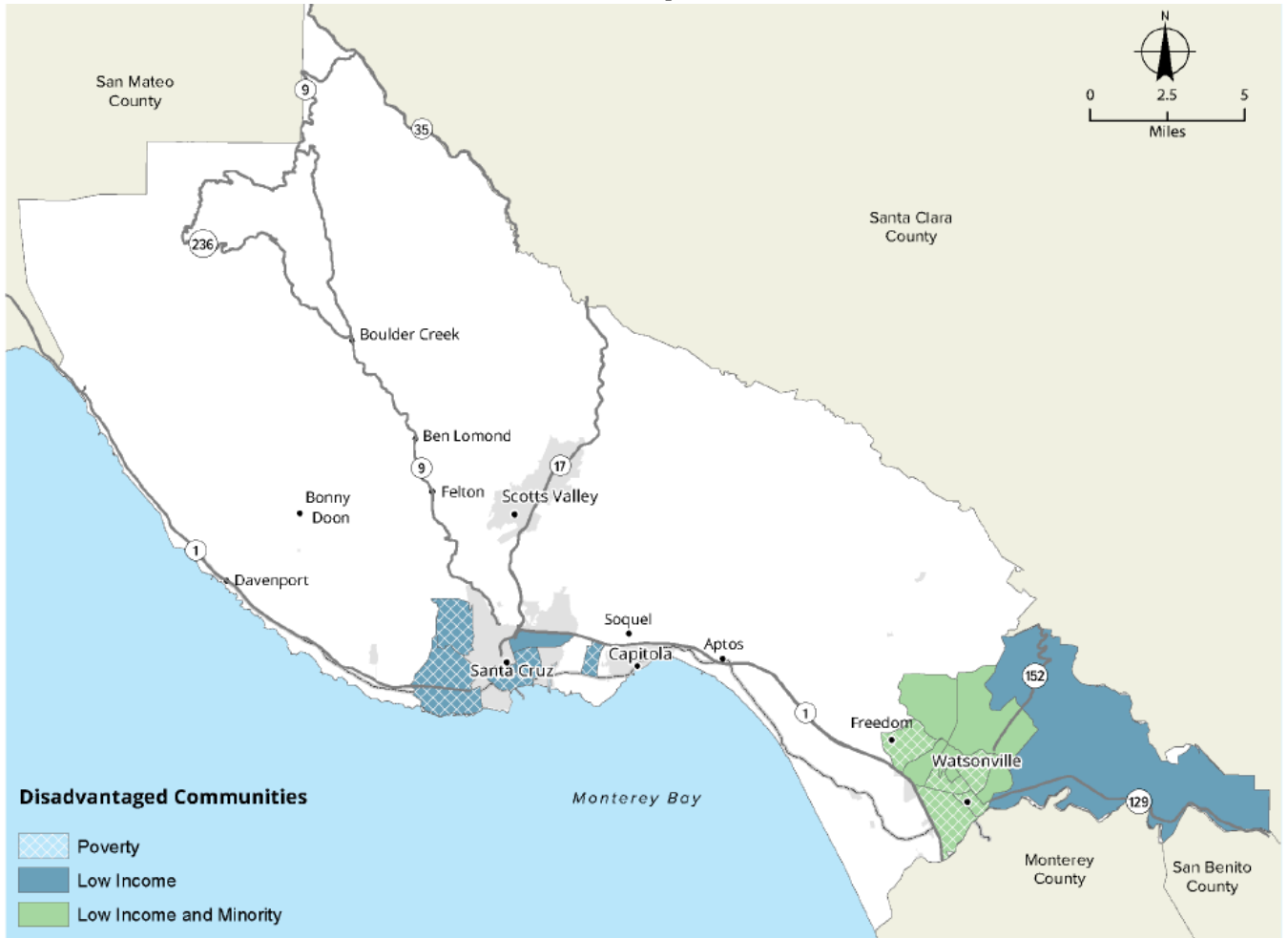


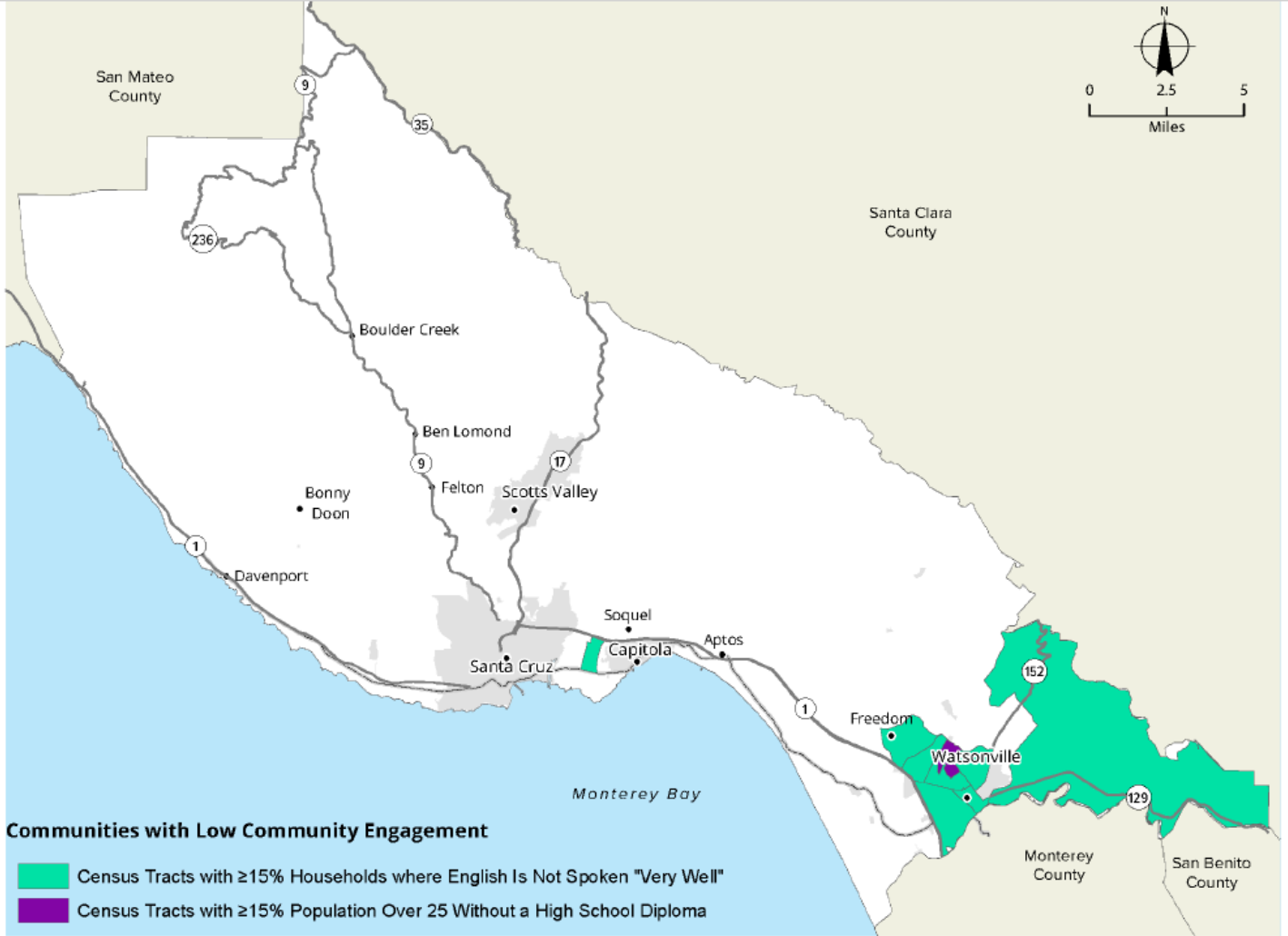
Figure 3.21 – Minority, Low Income and Poverty Areas in Santa Cruz County

Note: Minority areas are defined as census tracts where greater than 65% of the total population is non-white. Low-income areas are defined as census tracts where greater than 33% of residing families earn less than 200% of the 2015 federal poverty level. Poverty areas are defined as census tracts where greater than 25% of households earned less than the 2015 federal poverty level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, AMBAG

2045 RTP: Low Engagement Areas

Defined as Census tracts where English is not spoken "very well" in 15% or more of households and/or Census tracts where 15% of the population does not have a high school diploma



2045 RTP: Communities with Low Mobility

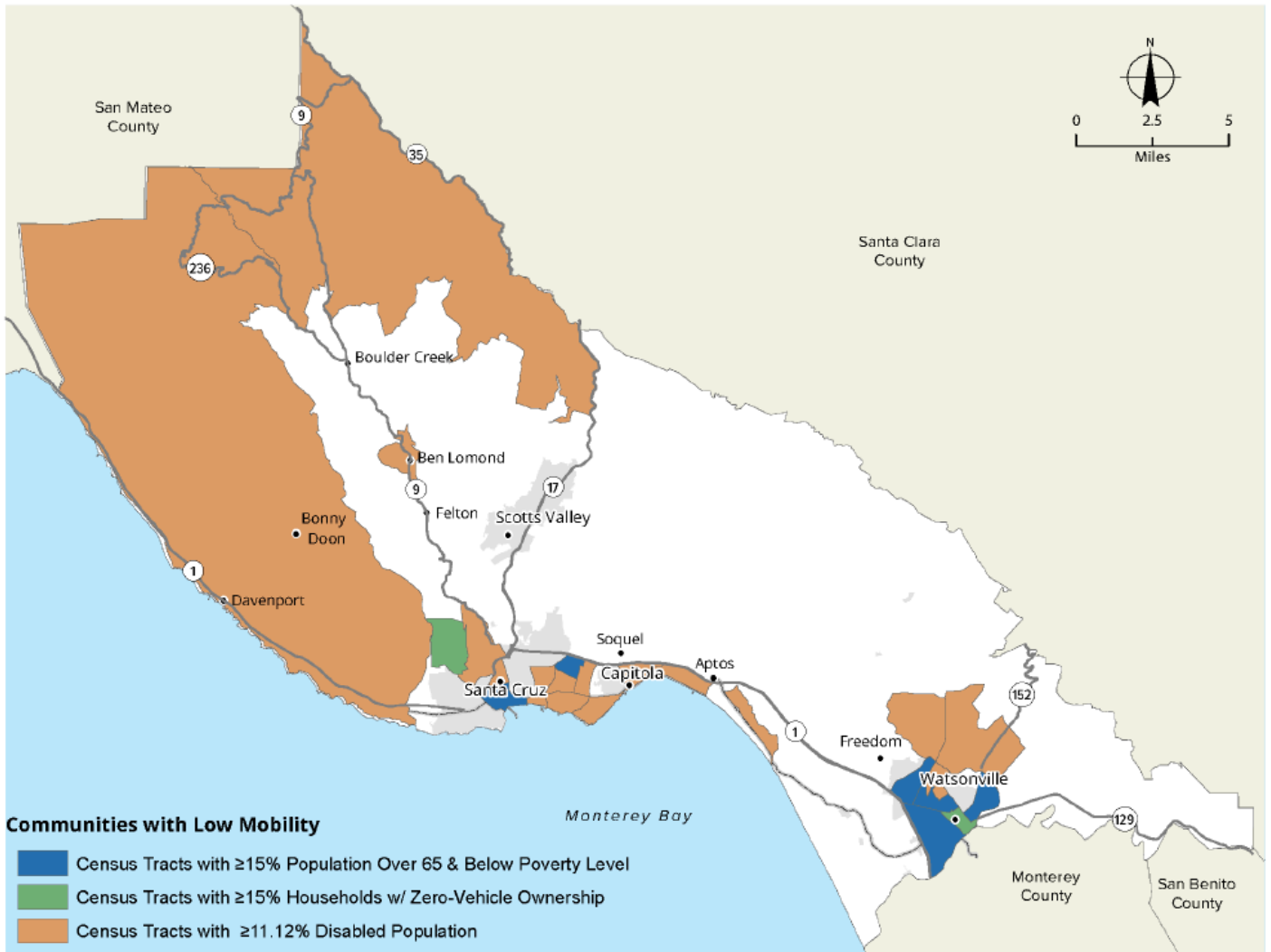


Figure 3.23 - Communities with Low Mobility

Note: Low Mobility areas are defined as any Census tract in which 5 percent or less of the households have zero-car ownership, more than 11.35 percent of the population had a disability, and/or 15 percent of the population aged 65 and over had income below the 2015 federal poverty level.

2045 RTP: Distribution of Seniors and Youth

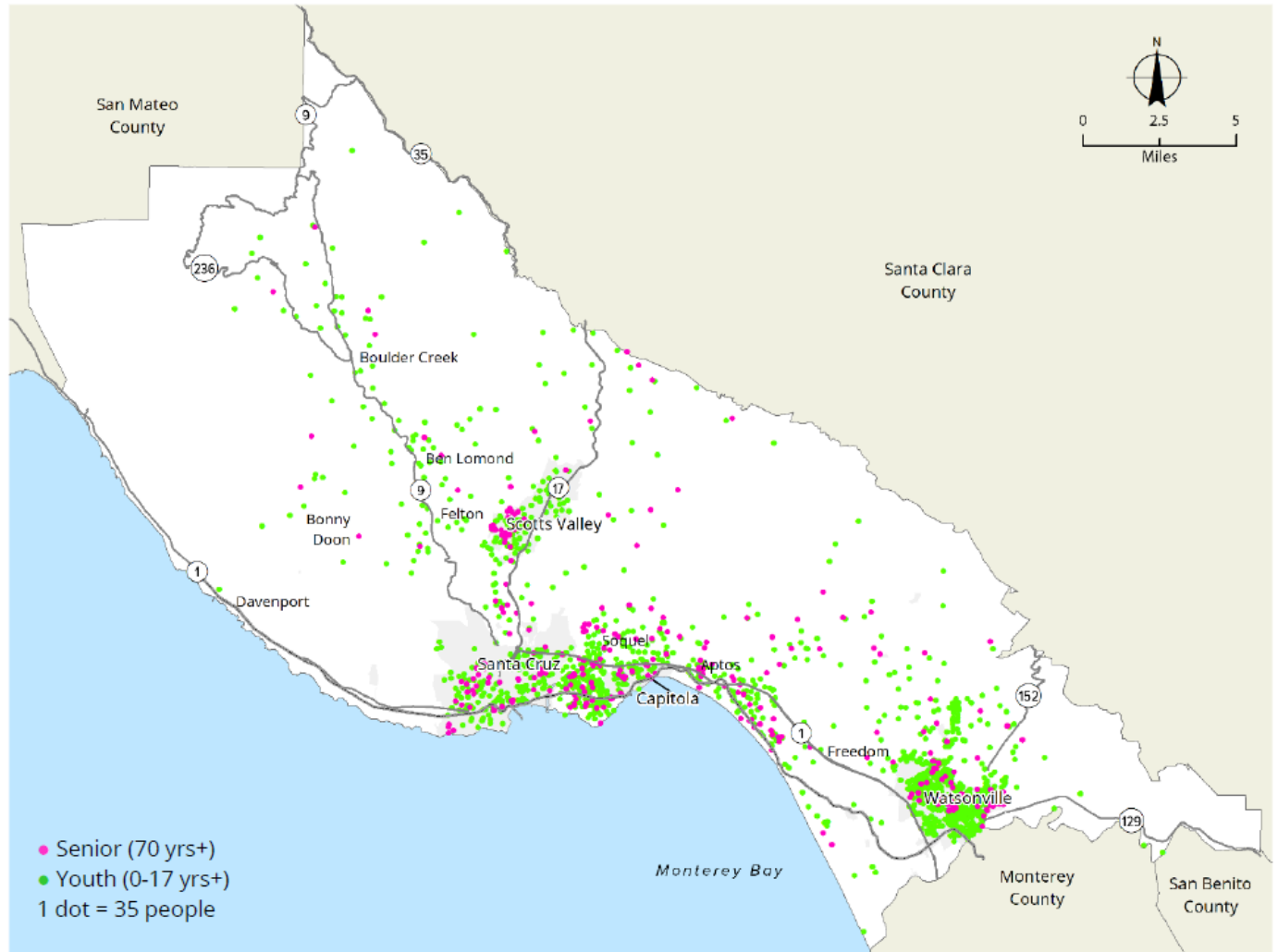


Figure 3.24 – Distribution of Senior and Youth Populations in Santa Cruz County

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Additional Background:

Several state and federal grant programs target at least a portion of available funds for investment in areas that are considered “disadvantaged communities” for one reason or another. This includes funding from the state’s cap-and-trade program, which was authorized by the California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB32) for programs that reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, the California Transportation Commission’s Active Transportation Program (ATP), the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and several other transportation and non-transportation programs. Many state, federal, regional, and local agencies use slightly varying metrics to define equity communities, sometimes referred to as “Disadvantaged Communities (DAC)”, “Priority Populations”, and “Communities of Concern” in legislation, policies and guidelines, but all aim to improve quality of life and economic opportunity in communities that are considered disproportionately burdened based on certain geographic, socio-economic, public health, and/or environmental hazard criteria.

In 2012, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 535 (de Leon), directing that 25 percent of the proceeds from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (cap-and-trade) go to projects that provide a benefit to disadvantaged communities. The legislation gave CalEPA responsibility for identifying disadvantaged communities for those cap-and-trade funds, which resulted in the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen).

In 2016, the Legislature passed AB 1550 (Gomez), which now requires that 25 percent of cap-and-trade funds be spent on projects located in disadvantaged communities and added a focus on investments in low-income communities and households. AB 1550 defines low-income households as those with: 1) a household income at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income, or 2) a household income at or below the threshold designated as low-income established by the California Housing and Community Development.

In 2022, President Biden established the Justice40 Initiative, setting a goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments (including many federal transportation grants) flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment. The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool is a geospatial mapping tool designed to identify federally defined “disadvantaged communities”.

Transportation Equity Workgroup
TENTATIVE - 2024 Meeting Schedule - TENTATIVE -

- *Most meetings will be held the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 12-1pm by zoom. Additional meetings, extended meeting times, or alternate dates may be scheduled. Meetings may be cancelled if there are no action items.*
- *This is a draft list of possible meeting topics. Additional transportation planning, policy and funding items and Equity Action Plan items may be discussed, as needed. Please check the current agenda for the most up-to-date information.*

January 23 - Moderator: Eric Medina
Meeting focus: Transportation equity metrics and maps

January 30 - Moderator: David Morales
Agenda items: any carryover from prior meetings

February 20 (12-1:30pm) - Moderator: Nicon MacDonal
Agenda Items

- Transit Unmet Needs
 - i. Santa Cruz METRO buses- planned services
 - ii. Paratransit services overview (Lift Line and Volunteer Center)
 - iii. Unmet Transit Needs list
 - iv. Zero Emission Rail and Trail project
- Regional Transportation Plan goals and policies

March – In-Person (2 hours) DATE-TBD - Moderator: Civicwell
Agenda items:

- Watsonville transportation needs and plans overview
- Walking “audit” of 1-3 neighborhoods

March 19 - Moderator: Chris Davis
Agenda items:

- Engagement best practices
- Countywide multimodal transportation needs assessment (identified in past outreach and plans and additional needs)

April 16 - Moderator: Crysall Gonzalez
Agenda items:

- Watsonville-Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor (scope)

May 21 - Moderator – Kanyon Sayers-Roods

- Regional Transportation Plan (RTP): Draft Project List and equity analysis

June 18 - Moderator: Isabelle Tuncer

Agenda items: Focus on Youth

- Presentation on youth transportation programs, resources and challenges

July- no meeting

- TBD

August 20 - Moderator: Meilin Obinata

Agenda Items: TBD

September 17 - Moderator: Colleen Stone

Agenda Items:

- Administrative Draft Equity Plan

Other items, TBD when presented:

- Climate Plans: County/RTC Climate Adaptation and Vulnerability Assessment (CAVA) for unincorporated county roads, rail corridor and other
- Presentations from other agencies and organizations working on transportation equity projects and climate action plans, including cities, County, METRO, Ecology Action, Regeneración.

SCCRTC
Transportation Equity Workgroup

Meeting Notes
December 19, 2023
12:00pm - Zoom

Workgroup Members Present

Chris Davis
David Morales
Eric Medina
Kanyon Sayers-Roods
Maria Perez
Isabelle Tuncer
Meilin Obinata
Nicona MacDonald

Others Present

Rachel Moriconi, RTC
Josh Meyer, CivicWell, U.S. DOT Thriving Communities consultant

1. Introductions

Maria Perez served as moderator for the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves, shared their backgrounds and interests, and discussed equity and transportation issues.

New members/attendees: Chris Davis, a small business owner from Watsonville, noted his interest in transit equity. Isabelle Tuncer, the director of a nonprofit providing free music education, highlighted the challenge of getting students to arts program locations.

Follow-up:

- **Workgroup:** Review 11/27 meeting notes and email Rachel any edits.

2. Transportation Equity Issues and Challenges in Santa Cruz County
(continuation of Item 5 from 11/27/23 meeting)

The workgroup discussed some of the transportation challenges that disproportionately impact some communities, including the importance of addressing safety and access issues, as well as emergency response. The group was asked to review and add to the list of challenges. Rachel also mentioned staff is working with local agencies to develop a more

comprehensive list of project ideas and needs, which have been identified by the community through a variety of other planning efforts. Meilin suggested inviting other organizations and agencies that provide transportation services to future workgroup meetings to share data and materials.

In response to questions from Meilin, Rachel shared information about the role of the RTC in coordinating transportation and planning projects across multiple jurisdictions in Santa Cruz County, that the RTC's board is made up of County Supervisors, city council members, and METRO transit board members and is accountable to Santa Cruz County residents, including for the Measure D sales tax.

Isabelle noted there is a shortage of school district drivers in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and suggested exploring collaboration to improve services. Nicono indicated SLV also needs more bus drivers and that driver pay was an issue in recruitment. David requested additional data in order to identify most critical needs and Meilin suggested looking at best use of resources. Workgroup members indicated agreement on priorities for enhancing safety in Watsonville and improving services for youth in the county. Members also discussed the challenges of combining transit operations from different agencies due to funding and rules, and the importance of emergency response and evacuation planning, funding, and training for bus drivers, as demonstrated after recent flooding incidents; transit service to juvenile hall; stigma public transit has, the need to encourage and make it easier for more people to ride transit.

Follow-Up:

- **RTC Staff:**

- Finish compiling a list of needs/challenges and possible projects that have already been identified for workgroup members to review.
- Invite other groups and agencies that have been working on transportation and climate change to share information at future meetings
- Reach out to school districts and METRO to discuss transportation and possible coordination/combining service
- Reach out to METRO and County regarding transportation to juvenile hall – goal is to reduce time youth are held

- **Workgroup members:** Check in with others in their communities and email Rachel challenges to add to the list

3. Defining and identifying transportation equity communities (continuation of Item 6 from 11/27/23 meeting)

Staff requested input on possible alternative terminology to the term “disadvantaged communities” and metrics to use to identify areas and individuals who have been overburdened and/or underserved. These terms and metrics will be used across RTC transportation planning efforts, equity analyses, prioritization criteria for funding projects, and alignment of resources for public engagement.

The workgroup discussed replacing the term "disadvantaged community" with more positive or objective terms and avoiding pejorative terms. Individual workgroup members expressed support for the terms: priority, equity, underserved, terms that acknowledge there have disadvantages and need for fairness. David stated the term "equity" has the potential to imply unfairness towards certain communities and could face a backlash. Chris expressed strong support for using “equity” to address disparities and emphasized the importance of distinguishing between equality and equity. Meilin suggested that the RTC should take a clear position on equity and adopt modern and equitable practices, despite potential backlash. No consensus was reached on naming conventions.

The workgroup briefly discussed the equity plan and metrics, noting some of the potential metrics are problematic due to deficiency-based language and that metrics should be used to show progress towards goals. Meilin proposing the idea of sharing everyone's contact details and

Due to time constraints, staff requested that members review and email input on possible metrics prior to the next meeting.

Follow-up:

- **Staff:**
 - Email roster and “homework”
- **Workgroup:** Review and provide input on possible metrics prior to next meeting. Solicit input from other stakeholders.
 - Meilin, Eric, and Niconia indicated interest in setting up a study group to better understand and identify potential metrics.

4. Next meetings: The next meeting was scheduled for January 23rd and possibly January 30th at noon. Members indicated that Tuesdays at noon tend to work well for meetings.

The workgroup also discussed the importance of sharing information and coordinating effectively. María suggested creating a schedule for future

meetings, and Josh agreed to the start of the conversations. The workgroup also discussed the challenge of fitting meetings into everyone's schedules and the potential of forming smaller groups to tackle specific issues. The role of their group in advising and making decisions was also discussed, with the RTC clarifying that their role is to provide thoughtful input.

- **Follow-up for Staff:**

- Send out calendar invites for future meetings; include information on moderators for each meeting

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