









Santa Cruz County Transportation Equity Action Plan

Draft November 2025









Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

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The Santa Cruz County Transportation Equity Action Plan (Equity Plan) is our commitment to advancing equity within the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) and for the communities we serve. Every individual in Santa Cruz County deserves access to safe, affordable, reliable, and equitable transportation options that connect them to essential services—jobs, education, healthcare, recreation, and community—regardless of income, race, ethnicity, ability, or age.

In order to advance the RTC's efforts to develop and deliver transportation solutions for a vibrant, sustainable, and equitable community, it is critical that our staff, board of Commissioners, committees, and partners recognize existing disparities and intentionally integrate equity into all aspects of our work—from hiring and procurement to community engagement and project prioritization.

We must constantly ask ourselves: Who are the impacted groups? How are they affected? How do we evaluate disparities? What outcomes should we consider?

Through strategic and equity-focused planning, we have evaluated the strengths and challenges of our agency and committed to continuous improvement with empathy, transparency, and conviction. In developing this Transportation Equity Action Plan, we have strengthened relationships with community members, identified key actions to reduce disparities, and implemented equity-centered trainings for our Board, staff, and advisory committees. We have also expanded outreach to historically underrepresented groups and will continue to engage in internal reflection to foster growth—both individually and as an agency.

I am deeply grateful for the dedication of our staff, board, volunteers, and community members who contributed to the development of this plan. While we recognize that there is much more work to do, this plan provides a framework for accountability and will guide our continued efforts to build a more inclusive and equitable transportation system for all.

Sarah Christensen, Executive Director
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)

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The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation or subjected to discrimination in any relation to any RTC activities, services, project development, planning, outreach, or employment. To request this file in another language or alternative format, please contact the RTC at (831) 460-3200 or info@sccrtc.org. Any person who believes that they have been discriminated against by the RTC or the RTC's consultants or affiliates cane file a complaint (https://www.sccrtc.org/about/title-vi-civil-rights-program/).

Acknowledgements

Funding

The Santa Cruz County Transportation Equity Action Plan was funded by a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning Grant. Consultant support provided by the <u>U.S. DOT Thriving Communities Program</u> assisted with data collection, outreach, development of equity metrics, and equity priority communities maps.







Equity Action Plan Team

Several individuals and groups provided invaluable input that resulted in this plan. Primary team members are noted below with an asterisk (*).

Transportation Equity Workgroup*

The RTC formed a Transportation Equity Workgroup to help guide the development of the Transportation Equity Action Plan and support the implementation of quality transportation infrastructure, services, and solutions that more equitably meet the diverse needs of community members. Recruitment focused on including the voices of community members that have been historically marginalized or experience systemic discrimination, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), tribes, low-income, unhoused, youth, rural, queer, people with disabilities, and older adults.

- Chris Davis
- Crystal Gonzalez
- Nicona MacDonald
- Eric Medina
- David Morales
- Chris Nestlerode
- Meilin Obinata

- María Perez
- Antonio Rivas
- Kanyon CoyoteWoman Sayers-Roods
- Colleen Stone
- Daniela Suarez
- Isabelle Tuncer

The Justice Collective, Consultant Team*

The RTC hired The Justice Collective, leaders on equity and justice, to assist with the assessment of RTC policies and procedures and to conduct trainings with staff, board, and committee members.

- Ellie Tumbuan, Owner and Project Advisor
- Jenna Ortiz, Project Manager and Engagement Lead
- Crystal Sanders-Alvarado, Assessment Lead

Matthew Melendrez, Technical Assistance, MJM Coaching LLC

U.S.DOT Thriving Communities Partners

The U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) Thriving Communities Program provided consultant support technical analysis.

- Ray Cancino, Executive Director, Community Bridges*
- Justin Meek, Ast. Community Development Director, City of Watsonville*
- Sarah Huang, Shared Mobility Center*
- Tony Leonard, Community Design Project Manager, CivicWell*
- Josh Meyer, Program Director, Community Design, CivicWell*
- Meredith Davis, Community Planner, USDOT
- Katarina Hou, Senior Program Associate, Shared-Use Mobility Center
- Peter Huether, Senior Research Associate, Transportation Program, ACEEE
- Jacob Korn, former Senior Associate, RMI
- Christi Nakajima, Sr. Research Analyst, Transportation, ACEEE

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is a public agency overseen by a governing board made up of County Supervisors, city council members, transit representatives, and the Caltrans District 5 Director. The RTC is advised by community members serving on its Bicycle Advisory Committee and Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC). The RTC works in close coordination with the County of Santa Cruz, cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO), the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), and other organizations providing transportation services to people in Santa Cruz County that serve on the RTC's Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) and other committees.

- RTC Commissioners
- Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC)
- RTC Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC)
- Sarah Christensen, Executive Director
- Luis Mendez, Director of Planning and Programming*
- Yesenia Medina, Administrative Services Officer*
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- Nisha Singh, Internal Services Director
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- Cindy Convisser, Contract Specialist
- James Falkenroth, Communications Intern
- Johnny Esteban, former Transportation Planner
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- Matthew Schroeder, former Transportation Planner

Other Community Members and Groups

Our community's thoughtful participation in discussions about equity and transportation priorities demonstrates the immense value of public participation in the local transportation planning process. Members of the public, including volunteers that serve on RTC advisory committees and stakeholder groups, provided input at several points during development of this Transportation Equity Action Plan. Input was also received from many community groups and organizations, with staff and volunteers from the Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan Ohlone People, Community Bridges, Regeneración, Pajaro Valley Arts Council, Life on Wheels, Santa Cruz Black, NCAA, Watsonville Seniors Commission, Growing Greatness, Ecology Action, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the County Administrative Office (CAO) and Health Services Agency-Public Health having spent many hours providing invaluable input to staff and consultants.

Sources

In developing the Santa Cruz County Equity Action Plan, RTC staff consulted documents from dozens of local, state, and federal government agencies, academic institutions, and equity leaders. Sources included information and resources provided by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and its national network of government agencies

working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. In addition to GARE resources, some text, concepts and graphics were borrowed from the California Department



of Transportation (Caltrans), U.S.DOT, the California Transportation Commission (CTC), Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission, California Tahoe Conservancy, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, California Council of Governments (CalCOG), City of Austin, City of Watsonville, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, DataShare Santa Cruz County, among others.

Land Acknowledgement

The RTC recognizes that what we refer to as "Santa Cruz County" is the unceded territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whose descendants were taken to missions Santa Cruz and San Juan Bautista during the violent Spanish colonization of the Central Coast of California. The RTC acknowledges the history and presence of Indigenous peoples throughout Santa Cruz County, their enduring relationship to their traditional homelands, and that today Indigenous peoples are working hard to restore traditional stewardship practices on these lands and to heal from historical trauma.

Background

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), as the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Santa Cruz County, is responsible for planning regional transportation projects, selecting projects to receive certain federal, state, and local funds (programming), providing services to assist travelers, and implementing capital infrastructure projects. The work of the RTC can improve the quality of life of Santa Cruz County residents, workers, and visitors. Our work can increase access to jobs, schools, recreation, and other destinations. It can also improve health and reduce emissions. Our multimodal transportation system of streets, roads and highways, buses, bike lanes, sidewalks, and other transportation facilities and services connect us to opportunities, enrichment, and each other.

While transportation facilities and services can open doors, shatter barriers, and foster community growth --- a lack of transportation facilities and services can also serve as barriers to accessing jobs, health care, food, recreation, families, schools, and our communities. Transportation conditions can result in inequitable outcomes for people based on race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, immigration status, and other identities or

experiences. Equity planning assists RTC employees, board members, committees and partners to consider the potential disproportionate benefits or negative impacts of RTC services, planning, funding decisions, and project implementation activities, and internal agency operations.

This Transportation Equity Action Plan (Equity Plan) for Santa Cruz County, funded by a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning Grant, with consultant support provided by the U.S.DOT Thriving Communities Program, builds upon the RTC's state and federally mandated anti-discrimination efforts

WHAT IS TRANSPORTATION EQUITY?

Transportation equity ensures everyone has fair access to transportation options—regardless of income, race, ethnicity, ability, or background—so they can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Ultimately, it is not just about moving people from point A to point B, but about building a transportation system that ensures everyone can fully engage in social, economic, and civic life.

(Nondiscrimination/Title VI/ADA Plan) and extensive input that members of the community have provided to RTC and other agencies that work in Santa Cruz County about transportation needs, priorities, and the community's vision that the transportation network of roads, bikeways, sidewalks, trails, and transit in Santa Cruz County should serve all users, provide safe access to opportunities, and not disproportionately benefit or negatively impact anyone.

This Equity Plan documents transportation disparities in Santa Cruz County, updates the regional definition of "Disadvantaged Communities" or "Equity Priority Communities" used to identify communities and individuals that have faced greater barriers due to historic or systemic inequities or racism, identifies transportation priorities and engagement strategies that can reduce disparities, and includes an assessment of RTC policies, procedures and practices.

What is a Transportation Equity Action Plan?

The Santa Cruz County Transportation Equity Action Plan (Equity Plan) is a strategic guide that can be used to identify and address inequities in multimodal transportation systems, investments, and internal agency operations. Ultimately, transportation equity is about creating a more just and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. It is not just about moving people from point A to point B; it's about building communities where everyone can participate fully in social, economic, and civic life. This Equity Plan guides the RTC's efforts to advance equity by embedding equitable practices into agency policies and operations, as well as transportation planning, project delivery, and project prioritization to reduce disparities and strengthen authentic public engagement and collaboration. The plan describes current challenges and barriers to equity, identifies areas in Santa Cruz County experiencing the greatest disparities, and establishes goals and actions to address these challenges to promote a more equitable transportation system.

Why We Need a Transportation Equity Action Plan

Historical actions by government agencies have created and maintained inequities through laws, policies, funding, programs, and organizational culture. Institutionalized policies and practices continue to perpetuate injustice throughout the nation, the State, and Santa Cruz County. As we reflect on, assess, and improve policies and practices, we can rectify historical discrimination and avoid future inequities.

As noted by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, while local governments like the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) may consider themselves fair and just, people of color, tribal communities, low-income residents and workers, people with disabilities, and seniors fare worse than their counterparts in every area: housing, employment, education, justice, and health. Disparities did not magically disappear with the Civil Rights Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, or local Nondiscrimination and Title VI Plans. However, because local governments have a unique responsibility to all residents, inequities can and must be addressed. The public sector must be for the public good; current inequities are destructive. We must go beyond individual, intentional discrimination or acts of bigotry, and examine the systems in which we all live. We must investigate—honestly—how our longstanding systems, policies, and practices, unintentionally or not, have created and continue to maintain inequities, and we must change them.

Transportation equity can support economic advancement by ensuring access to employment opportunities. Reliable and affordable transportation opens doors to jobs, allowing individuals to participate more fully in the economy. Access to educational opportunities and healthcare are also directly impacted by transportation options. When

people can easily reach schools and training centers, hospitals and clinics, and healthy food they are better able to improve their health and well-being. Furthermore, equitable transportation promotes social inclusion by connecting people to their communities, fostering a sense of belonging, and reducing social isolation.

Beyond the basic understanding of fairness, transportation equity delves into the systemic inequalities embedded within transportation planning and policy. It acknowledges that historical patterns of discrimination and marginalization have shaped our current transportation landscape, resulting in persistent disparities in access and outcomes. Understanding these historical roots is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote equity.

As a county-level agency that serves the entire community, residents, visitors, and workers, it is important for the RTC to embrace our diversity and recognize disparities that exist in our community. By setting policies, taking real actions, and holding ourselves accountable for results, the RTC will contribute to creating a Santa Cruz County where everyone can thrive.

Equity vs. Equality

EQUALITY:

Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.

EQUITY:

Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances, and conditions.

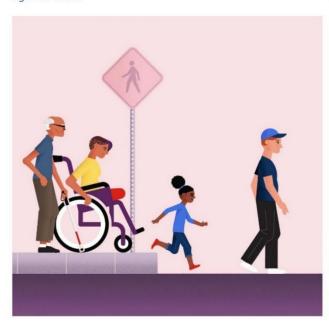




Figure 1. Equality vs Equity (Robert Wood Johnson Foundations, 2022)

Equity is often used interchangeably with equality, though they are not the same. Equality means exactly as it says, giving the same to everyone regardless of context. Equity requires

us to give people what they need, recognizing barriers and conditions such as race, age, and ability that differ. The image above helps demonstrate this distinction.

Living Action Plan

This Transportation Equity Action Plan is meant to be a living document and a companion to the RTC's regularly updated Nondiscrimination Plan, which serves as the RTC's federally-required Title VI Civil Rights Program and Implementation Plan, Language Assistance Plan, and Americans with Disability Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act program to address discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, due to limited English proficiency, due to ability, or on the basis of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious creed, veteran or socioeconomic status.

Transportation Disparities

The RTC is dedicated to advancing racial and economic equity by removing barriers to opportunity through enhanced transportation access and mobility options for equity priority communities (also known as disadvantaged communities or DACs). This commitment requires the RTC and our partners to recognize the lasting impacts of racism and systemic oppression of specific communities and actively collaborate with communities to identify transportation solutions that improve access to jobs, goods, nutritious food, healthcare, services, and parks through integrated land-use and transportation planning.

Conditions contributing to transportation disparities in Santa Cruz County include:

- Income inequality, with many households economically vulnerable.
- Extreme housing and cost of living pressures, squeezing household budgets and reducing income available for transportation and mobility.
- Racial/ethnic disparities that interweave with income and place.
- Transportation safety, reliability, access, infrastructure conditions, and services remain uneven and differ in northern and southern, urban and rural areas of Santa Cruz County.

For effective transportation equity work in Santa Cruz County, agencies must explicitly account for how income, race/ethnicity, geography, cost burden, access to jobs/education, infrastructure condition, and access to safe and convenient transit service, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are connected.

Limited access to transportation options such as transit, safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian facilities, poor road conditions, and greater distances to access services compound socioeconomic inequities. Additional information on some of the underlying conditions impacting transportation equity are described below.

Median Household Income: The 2025 median household income in Santa Cruz County was approximately \$102,000, however income disparities are pronounced. Latino households earn 22% less than white households. (https://www.datasharescc.org, 2025)

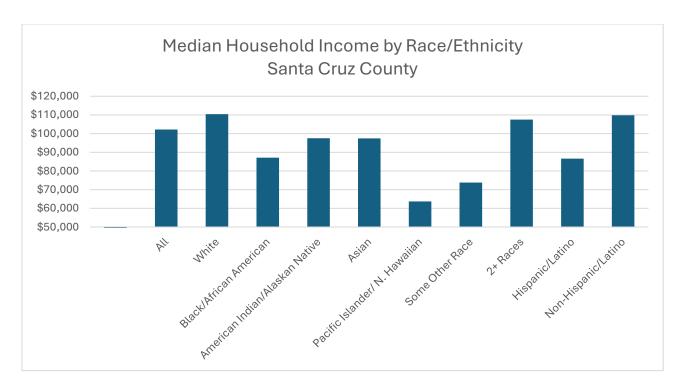


Figure 2. Median Household Incomes by Race/Ethnicity (Datasharessc.org, 2025)

Real Cost Threshold: Approximately one-third of working households in Santa Cruz County (over 30,000 households) have less income than is needed to meet basic needs including the costs of housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and taxes. 63% of Latino households live below the "real cost" threshold compared to 27% of white households in Santa Cruz County. (https://unitedwaysca.org, 2025)

Exacerbating income inequality, over 40% of the Watsonville population is unbanked or underbanked, meaning that half of the population is excluded from credible banking institutions and the US financial system. This creates an overreliance on predatory lenders to meet financial needs and gaps. Watsonville has three times as many predatory lending services as compared to its wealthier North County counterparts. (UCSC Blum Center Mamas con Mas)

Racial/Ethnic Disparities: Latinos (94,350 people) make up 36.4% of the countywide population and over 75% of South County residents. Across most socioeconomic demographics Latinos face greater barriers.

Language Barriers: Nearly 35% of households in Santa Cruz County primarily speak a language other than English at home. Areas in Santa Cruz County with the highest percentiles of limited English-speaking residents, as compared to the rest of California are shown in the map below, with areas over the 80 percentile (compared to the rest of California) concentrated in and around Watsonville. Throughout its history, Watsonville has

received waves of immigrants from all over the world, including people from Denmark, China, Japan, Croatia, and Latin America. Today, nearly 20% of students in Santa Cruz County are enrolled as English Language Learners (ELLs), learning English as a second language, in public schools. The first language of the majority of these students is Spanish, with Otomian languages, such as Mixtexo the primary language for hundreds of students.

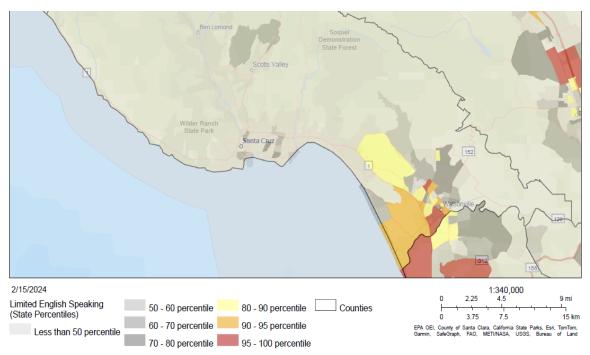


Figure 3. Limited English-Speaker Areas. (US Census, 2024)

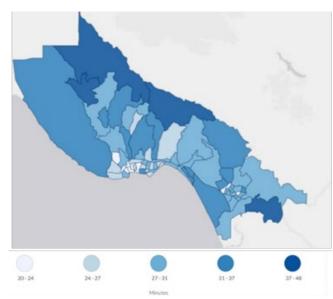


Figure 4. Average Commute Times in Minutes (Datasharescc.org, US Census, 2024)

Longer Commutes: Communities in rural areas and in southern Santa Cruz County face longer commutes to employment, education, and essential services, experience less frequent bus service, and have higher collision rates. Lower wage workers have less flexibility when it comes to finding housing near where they work, face longer commutes and reduced access to vehicles.

Transportation to Medical Appointments: In the Santa Cruz County (2024 Community Health Assessment, Santa Cruz County HSA), transportation to medical appointments was identified as one of the key barriers to access to healthcare, especially if patients need to go out of county, such as for Veterans Affairs (VA) care.

Roadway Conditions: Over 60% of roads in unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County are in poor or failed condition. This is especially acute in rural areas and along roadways passing over waterways, where maintaining culverts can be more challenging.

Community Spending on Transportation: Household spending on transportation as a percentage of all annual household spending varies from 14.1% to 17.2% in Santa Cruz County, with the zip codes spending the most on transportation located in the North Coast and Southern Santa Cruz County.¹

¹ Includes spending on out-of-town transportation, local transportation, and vehicle expenses.

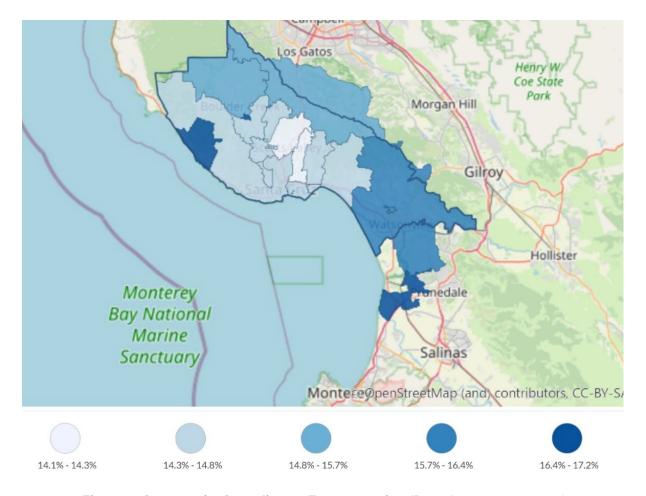


Figure 5. Community Spending on Transportation (Datasharessc.org, 2025)

Fewer Multimodal Choices/Limited Access to Destinations: Fewer bicycle lanes, less frequent transit service, and more gaps in the sidewalk network leave residents in many areas of the county with fewer travel options. These areas may disproportionately suffer from the negative impacts of having poor access, including but not limited to spending large amounts of money on owning and maintaining a vehicle. The Caltrans Transportation Equity Index (EQI) map of areas with poor multimodal access to destinations is shown below. Caltrans compared transit and auto travel times, and travel times by bicycle and walking under varying conditions.



Figure 6. Access to Destinations (Caltrans EQI, 2025)

Traffic Exposure: The Caltrans EQI looks at socioeconomic data, traffic proximity and volume data, and crash data to identify areas that are most impacted by traffic and the negative externalities it produces, such as noise and pollution.

The Digital Divide Index (DDI): The DDI measures the gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not. This can prevent or limit access to transit trip information, RTC information and engagement efforts. High-speed internet access is increasingly recognized as a "super determinant of health," playing a key role in health outcomes and

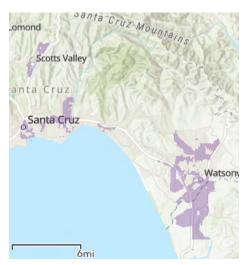


Figure 7. Traffic Exposure Index (Caltrans EQI, 2025)

impacting social determinants of health such as employment, education and a range of essential services. Areas where the digital divide is high can also limit the ability of people in those areas to telecommute and access often higher paying jobs. Communities most in

need of investment include those with a high percentage of persons who are age 60 or over, incarcerated individuals, veterans, persons with disabilities, members of a racial or ethnic minority group, rural residents, individuals with a language barrier and individuals living in households with incomes not exceeding 150 percent of the federal poverty level. These covered populations have experienced lower rates of computer and internet use (<u>U.S.</u> <u>Census Bureau</u>).



Figure 8. Computer Access - Areas where 7.5% or more of residents do not have access to a computer. (US Census, 2024)

Transportation Investments: Substantial state and regional investments in Santa Cruz County's transportation network primarily benefited residents in and around the City of Santa Cruz from 1995-2020, including four of the largest capital transportation projects in Santa Cruz County: Mission Street/SR1 Widening, the Highway 1/Highway 17 Interchange (Fishhook), MetroBase Transit Operations facility and Soquel-Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes project. In recent years, the RTC and partner agencies have shifted their focus towards improving transportation infrastructure and services that enhance access and mobility for South County residents.

Identifying Equity Priority Communities

A key element of this planning effort was to update the regional definition of "Disadvantaged Communities" that is used to identify communities and individuals that have faced greater barriers, been overburdened or underserved due to historic or systemic inequities or racism. These communities too often experience more crashes, face longer commutes to jobs and school, have fewer choices for how to get where they need to go, and have higher health risks than others due to demographic characteristics. Recognizing and mapping these communities helps agencies address disparities through more targeted transportation planning, outreach, and investments.

Based on extensive input from the RTC's Transportation Equity Workgroup, which included discussions on dozens of possible metrics, review of readily available data, and taking into consideration input from the RTC's advisory committees and members of the community, the RTC has identified "Transportation Equity Priority Communities" in Santa Cruz County. These include geographic areas where more than 40% of residents are low income or 50% or more are Latino or people of color, and areas serving higher concentrations of seniors, youth, and people with disabilities.

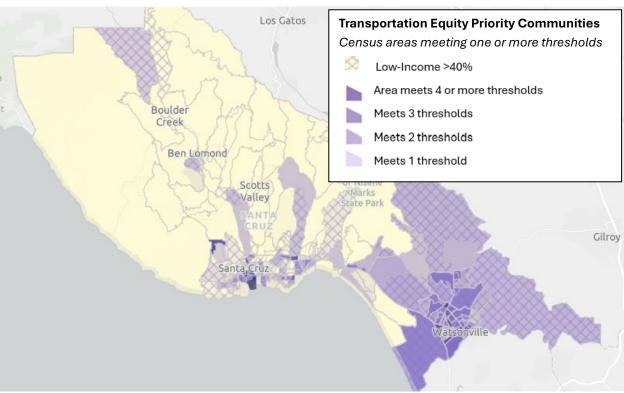


Figure 9. Transportation Equity Priority Communities (RTC, 2025).

The eight indices and thresholds to determine priority communities for this Equity Plan and the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) include:

- 1. **Low-Income**: An area would be considered low income if 40% or more of residents earn less than 80% of the statewide median income or are at or below the most recent county limit set by the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) or 200% of the federal poverty level.
- **1b. Poverty-Level**: Even if an area does not meet the Low-Income threshold above, an area would still be considered an equity priority community if greater than 20% of residents earn less than the federal poverty level.
- **2. People of Color**: 50% or more of the residents in an area are non-white, mixed-race, or Hispanic, Latino, Latinx or Latine ("minority areas")
- **3.** Limited English Proficiency/Linguistic Isolation (purple): 10% or more of households in an area where English is not spoken "very well."
- 4. People with a Disability: 15% or more of residents in an area have a disability
- **5. Seniors:** 10% or more of residents are over age 75
- **6. Youth:** 20% or more of residents are under age 18
- 7. Renters: 50% or more of occupants are renters.

In the map above, areas that meet several thresholds are darker in color, as compared to other areas in Santa Cruz County or California. Areas that meet the low-income threshold are shown with hatch marks. Geographic area sizes vary based on available data. Census blocks are the smallest geographic unit in the census (sometimes covering just a single city block), however most census data is only available for larger areas. A census tract is a geographic area that contains multiple block groups, and a block group is made up of multiple census blocks.

Maps showing the breakdown of each of these individual indices countywide are provided below.

Low-Income: This map reflects the percentage of residents earning less than 80% of the statewide median income or are at or below the most recent county limit set by the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) or 200% of the federal poverty level. Equity Priority Communities are areas where more than 40% of residents are low-income.

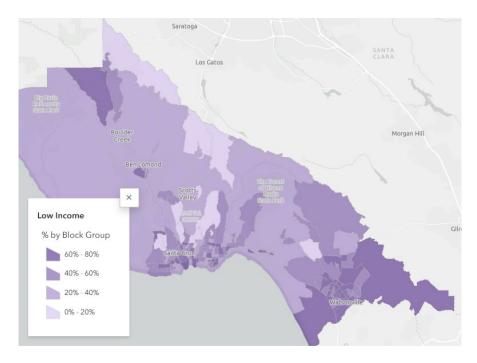


Figure 10. Figure Low-Income (U.S.Census, Block Group Level, 2025)

Poverty Level: Percentage of households in federal poverty level by Census block group. Equity Priority Communities are areas where more than 20% of residents earn less that the federal definition.



Figure 11. Poverty-Levels (American Community Survey, 2022)

People of Color: Equity Priority Communities are areas where people of color make up more than 50% of households.

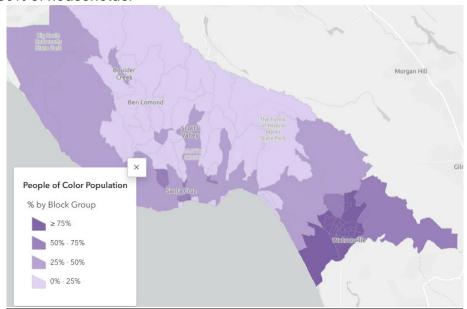


Figure 12. People of Color (U.S. Census, block group level, 2024)

<u>Limited English Proficiency/Linguistic Isolation</u>: Equity Priority Communities are areas where English is not spoken "very well" in 10% or more of households.



Figure 13. Limited English Proficiency (Census American Community Survey, block group, 2022)

People with a Disability: Areas where more than 15% of the population has a disability.



Figure 14. Disability (Census American Community Survey, census tract level, 2024)

Housing Affordability and Renters: Areas where greater than 50% of occupants are renters.



Figure 15. Renter Occupation Levels (U.S. Census)

<u>Key Destinations serving low-income individuals</u>: This includes areas around senior and community centers, food banks, health and human service departments, Title I schools, and other key destinations serving higher proportion of low-income individuals.



Figure 16. Destinations Serving Low-Income Individuals (Source: Local agencies, resource centers, County Health Services)

Key Destinations for Seniors: Areas within 300 meters of locations where seniors go more frequently than rest of population, including senior centers, senior housing, and medical facilities.



Figure 17. Key Destinations for Senior (Source: Local senior service providers)

<u>Youth under age 18</u>: Areas where 20% or more of residents are under 18 years old and areas immediately adjacent (300 foot radius) to schools serving a high proportion of low-income youth (Title I schools)

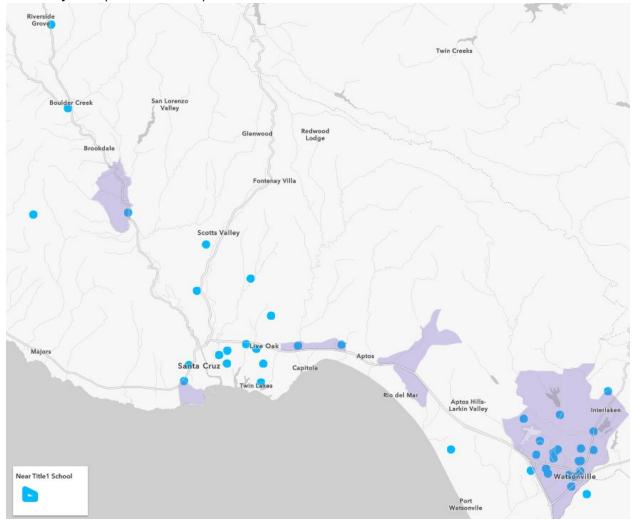


Figure 18. Youth Concentrations and Destinations (Census American Community Survey, census tract level and California Department of Education)

Nomenclature

Terminology and metrics used by government agencies, community-based organizations, and others to identify communities and individuals that are more likely to experience inequities vary at the local, regional, state, and national level. The RTC worked with its Transportation Equity Workgroup, E&DTAC, partner agencies, and other stakeholders to update regional definitions, terminology and metrics used by the RTC.

The RTC previously used the term "disadvantaged community," reflecting language in state and federal legislation, but many agencies are now shifting toward more positive and objective terminology, rather than pejorative terms. Following thoughtful discussions with

the Transportation Equity Workgroup, input from the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC), partner agencies, and other stakeholders, the RTC is increasingly using the term "equity priority communities" across its activities. State and federal agencies continue to use a variety of definitions, such as "disadvantaged communities (DAC)," "priority populations," "historically marginalized," "underserved," and "communities of concern," Local entities are often required to use metrics and definitions set by the funding agencies, though they are encouraged to adopt locally meaningful definitions or more locally applicable definitions.

It is important to note that language and terms related to equity and representation are continuously evolving and may be modified in the future.

Below are some of the terms used by other entities, drawn from existing sources, including, but not limited to the <u>Racial Equity Tools Glossary</u>, the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), and the <u>University of Washington Diversity</u>, <u>Equity</u>, and <u>Inclusion Style Guide</u>. The list of terms is not exhaustive, and the definitions and understandings of the terms may differ depending on agency or stakeholder perspectives.

- Areas of Concentrated Poverty
- Communities of Concern
- Disadvantaged Communities
- Economically Distressed Areas
- Environmental Justice Communities
- Equity Action Areas
- Equity Emphasis Area
- Equity Focus Communities
- Equity Prioritized Investment Areas

• Equity Priority Communities

- Equity Priority Neighborhoods
- Historically Marginalized Communities
- Opportunity Zones
- Priority Populations
- Transportation Disadvantaged Areas
- Transportation Equity Zones
- Underserved Communities

Goals, Vision and Actions

Vision: Every resident of Santa Cruz County has safe, affordable, reliable, and multimodal transportation options — whether walking, biking, rolling (wheelchairs, skateboards, scooter, etc.), taking transit, driving or any intermodal combination — that connect them to jobs, education, health care, recreation and community, regardless of income, race/ethnicity, age, disability, or gender.

Purpose: To reduce transportation disparities tied to income, geography or mobility constraints; to ensure that lower-income and historically underserved communities in the County receive equitable investments, service and opportunities; to align transportation policy with social justice, health and climate goals.

Goals and Strategies: To achieve this vision, goals and strategies have been identified in four key areas.

- 1. Advance Transportation Equity
- 2. Empower Communities in Decision-Making
- 3. Embed Equity in the RTC's Culture
- 4. Embed Equity in Project Development and Resource Equity

1. Advance Transportation Equity

1.1 Improve Affordable, Reliable Transit Options

- Expand bus frequency on key routes serving workers, including early-morning agricultural shifts and shift workers.
- Create seamless regional connections with Santa Cruz Metro, Monterey-Salinas
 Transit, and future rail service.
- Establish reduced-fare or zero-fare pilot for low-income riders.
- Expand options for riders who are "unbanked" to pay for transit passes.

1.2. Address Longer-Distance Commutes & Income Burdens

- Launch commute cost-reduction strategies for low-income families living farther from jobs due to affordable housing shortages. This could include carpool incentives and vanpools and microtransit to employment hubs.
- Work with employers to create employer-funded transportation benefits or vanpool programs, especially for lower wage workers.



1.3. Improve Road Safety in High-Injury Areas

- Support implementation of Vision Zero Plans and proven countermeasures that reduce injury and fatal crashes.
- Prioritize safety projects along known high-speed corridors such as Freedom Blvd,
 Main Street/State Route 152, Riverside Drive.
- Reduce crashes with lighting upgrades and traffic calming.
- Build safe bike and pedestrian networks for students and workers in farmworker communities.

1.4. Fair Share Contributions from Heavy Road Users

- Develop mechanisms for delivery companies (e.g., Amazon, UPS) whose EV fleets cause road wear but pay minimal fuel tax.
- Support state efforts to implement road user charges for commercial fleets with high miles in Santa Cruz County.

1.5. Reduce Travel Distances

• Support local jurisdictions building affordable workforce housing and transitoriented developments that will reduce vehicle miles traveled.

1.6. Safe Access for Walking, Biking, and Transit

- Prioritize filling sidewalk gaps in neighborhoods and key school corridors.
- Increase low-stress bike networks, such as protected bike infrastructure, connecting housing to jobs and schools.

1.7. Ensure EV Access Is Affordable & Equitable

 Support EV incentive programs for low-income families, including used EV rebate programs. Work with partner agencies, including MBARD and housing departments to facilitate public charging stations in apartments, mobile home parks, and downtown corridors.

1.8. Reduce Pollution Burdens in Agricultural & Industrial Zones

- Work with MBARD to target air monitoring and emissions-reduction projects along truck routes and in farmworker neighborhoods.
- Prioritize low-emission freight routes and truck parking to prevent idling near homes and schools.
- Incentivize local freight to electrify their fleet, either with electric trailers or electric trucks and trailers.

1.9. Improve Disaster-Resilient Transportation

- Prioritize funding for road repairs vulnerable to storms, flooding, and slope failures along the Pajaro River and creeks in and around Watsonville.
- Ensure emergency evacuation routes and information are accessible to low-income communities and non-English speaking households.

1.10. Equitable and Transparent Funding

- Use equity metrics to score transportation projects and track how transportation funds are allocated.
- Direct a higher proportion of funding to areas identified as Equity Priority Communities, including neighborhoods in and around Watsonville.
- Create biennial public dashboards showing progress on safety, road repairs, transit reliability, and multimodal improvements.



2. Empower Communities in Decision-Making: Outreach and Engagement

In advancing transportation equity, it is essential that marginalized communities have a meaningful voice in decision-making. The RTC is committed to strengthening engagement and communication with equity priority communities by integrating inclusive public participation strategies into all planning and project development processes. Active involvement of the people we serve leads to better decisions, more responsive projects, stronger public trust, and greater accountability and transparency.

While the RTC has seen strong participation in many outreach efforts, community input has not always reflected the full diversity of Santa Cruz County. Surveys of RTC staff, Board members, and advisory committees consistently identify community engagement as one of the most important tools for addressing inequities. Many residents, particularly those with lower incomes, people of color, and non-English-speakers, have not had equal opportunities to participate in shaping the transportation system. These community members bring valuable knowledge of local needs and strengths, yet their voices often go unheard due to longstanding barriers related to access, trust, language, and communication. As a result, projects may fail to meet their needs or may unintentionally reinforce existing disparities.

Authentic engagement requires sharing power with individuals and community-based organizations and recognizing their expertise. To make participation accessible, the RTC must provide information that is accessible to people with varying abilities and languages, increase cultural awareness, and strengthen coordination across local agencies to streamline communication. By investing in meaningful, inclusive engagement, the RTC can help build a more equitable, effective, and community-driven transportation future for all residents.

Rooted in our agency's mission to develop and deliver transportation solutions for a vibrant, sustainable, and equitable community, the RTC has developed an Equitable Outreach and Engagement Toolkit (Appendix A) to ensure that the community engagement strategies we design and carry out are equitable, inclusive, and responsive and foster greater community involvement and awareness of the RTC's work.

<u>Outreach and Engagement Strategies</u>: To enhance community communication and to better meet community members where they are, the RTC will undertake the following actions.

1. Prioritize Community Engagement and Communications: Target community members that have historically been underrepresented in RTC engagement and communications.

- 2. Language Access: Continue to offer translation services at RTC meetings, increase the number of staff at all levels that are fluent in Spanish. Hold at least two public workshops or meetings per year in Spanish (with English translation).
- 3. Community-Driven Decision Making: Partner with Community Based Organizations (CBOs), farmworker organizations, youth groups, and neighborhood associations to provide information about transportation projects and identify priorities.
- 4. Coordinate Joint Community Meetings: Work with partner agencies and community leaders to regularly share RTC and partner transportation efforts, updates, and partnership opportunities. This is intended to serve as an opportunity for the community to learn more about the various transportation entities in Santa Cruz County, better understand the RTC's role as it relates to other agencies, and learn about new projects and uplift important community needs in a manner that is more efficient and respectful of the community's time.
- 5. Support Community Meetings: Coordinate or support regular meetings with the local organizations, community partners, and schools to create synergy around equity work, and limit burden on individual agencies and community organizations.
- 6. Support Equity Trainings for Multi-Agency Staff: In collaboration with the CBOs, coordinate multi-agency opportunities for cultural competency training and best engagement practices that will serve communities facing the greatest inequities.
- 7. Identify Leaders for Community Outreach: Designate the PIO and the staff Communication Strategic Planning team to lead staff in community outreach and engagement. The lead will support staff to achieve improved community engagement, such as increasing the RTC's presence with local community-based organizations, schools, and employers.
- 8. Include Racial Equity and Community Engagement Requirements in Agreements with Projects Sponsors and Contractors: This includes developing agreement processes that include racial equity and community engagement in the RTC's application criteria and evaluation process.
- 9. Improve Advertisement of Contract or Funding Opportunities: Improve outreach and advertisement of available funding opportunities to reach equity priority communities.
- 10. Increase the number of bicultural and bilingual staff at outreach and engagement events.
- 11. Communication Strategies to Serve Diverse Communities: Establish and strengthen communication strategies that meet the communities where they are physically, in the appropriate language, and discuss items that are priorities to those communities. Examples of communities to establish relationships with include: school districts, CBOs affiliated with local houses of worship, local businesses, non-local organizations, and underrepresented visitors.

- 12. Diversify Outreach Strategies: Enhance community outreach through tabling at cultural events where communities who face the greatest inequities meet; conducting educational and experiential outreach at local educational programs; coordinating with other governmental or community entities to expand outreach; participate in local schools events; and continue to offer Internships.
- 13. Dismantle Language Access Barriers through Translation and Interpretation: Ensure that public meetings meet the language needs of the public. Aspire to translate all RTC news releases and external communications in Spanish. Continue providing Spanish-language interpretation services for RTC meetings and evaluate other language needs.
- 14. Develop Community Ambassador Programs: Explore partnerships with existing ambassador programs to reach out to the community to provide information and education about various transportation initiatives, and connection to resources and services. Ambassadors can help make RTC meetings and workshops a more welcoming place. Ambassadors should represent the demographics of communities facing the greatest inequities.
- 15. Provide Stipends to Encourage participation in RTC advisory committees: Consistent with civil rights, nondiscrimination guidance and best practices for engaging underrepresented community members, staff has been working to increase participation in RTC programs, planning and project development from community members that represent groups that have faced greater barriers due to historic or systemic inequities or racism. This includes recruiting members to RTC advisory committees that reflect the diversity of Santa Cruz County. In order to help with recruitment and to increase representation on RTC committees and workgroups from individuals that have been historically underserved, underrepresented, and/or discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, due to limited English proficiency, due to ability, age or sex, or on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, religious creed, veteran's or socioeconomic status, the RTC currently provides stipends of \$50 per committee meeting attended to members of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC), Measure D Taxpayer Oversight Committee, and Transportation Equity Workgroup. RTC should annually evaluate stipend amounts and determine if additional financial support is needed to recruit low-income community residents that reflect the diversity of Santa Cruz County.
- 16. Build Community Capacity: Partner with Caltrans or provide funding for other agencies and local organizations to create and support employment pathways for young, diverse, and local community members that are under-resourced. This may include collaboration with partners who use fellowship and student assistant models to diversify the candidate pool to support community engagement efforts.

Transportation Equity Workgroup

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) established a Transportation Equity Workgroup to help guide the RTC's Transportation Equity Action Plan and support implementation of quality transportation infrastructure, services, and solutions that more equitably meet the diverse needs of community members.

The Workgroup provided a forum for the exchange of information on equity concerns regarding transportation, while building and strengthening relationships between the transportation agencies (RTC, METRO, local jurisdictions, Lift Line) and community-based organizations, non-profits, and equity experts and practitioners. RTC staff collaborated with Workgroup members to identify best practices to elevate equity in transportation project planning and delivery; identify community engagement strategies; identify possible criteria for identifying "transportation disadvantaged communities" or "priority populations"; and metrics to evaluate equity benefits and outcomes of transportation investments and policies.

Membership: Equity Workgroup membership (see Acknowledgements) focused on voices in Santa Cruz County that are underrepresented at most RTC meetings and workshops, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), tribes, older adults, youth, lowincome, unhoused, rural communities, queer, women and women identifying individuals, people with disabilities and other historically marginalized community members. In addition to individuals, representatives from community-based organizations, housing justice organizations, environmental justice and equity organizations, and disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) were encouraged to participate.

Strategy for Future: The RTC should integrate the Transportation Equity Workgroup into its Bicycle Committee and Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC). The scope of these committees should be updated to emphasize their role in providing information, advice, and recommendations to the RTC and partner agencies on implementation of the Equity Plan and how to achieve meaningful outcomes in transportation equity, civil rights and environmental justice, especially as related to transportation planning, funding, project prioritization and implementation of highway, road, bike, pedestrian, transit and other transportation projects.

3. Embed Equity in the RTC's Culture – Equity Discovery Report & Recommendations

The RTC enlisted the assistance of The Justice Collective (TJC) to conduct a comprehensive Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) assessment for the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC). The assessment included a review of RTC policies, procedures, and internal documents; in-depth interviews and surveys from staff, board, advisory committee members and stakeholders, as well as anecdotal and observational data and insights from a customized series of trainings, group and individual conflict advising strategy sessions.

TJC assisted RTC to:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of policies, practices, and culture through an equity lens.
- Review and recommendations to remove barriers in hiring and procurement.
- Develop and deliver tailored ADEI trainings for staff, board, and committees.
- Hold conflict resolution and skill-building advising sessions with staff.
- Provide recommendations to inform the SCCRTC's creation of an actionable plan with monitoring and evaluation components to ensure sustained progress.

The TJC's *Equity Discovery Report and Recommendations*, included as Appendix B supports the RTC's mission to advance equity across organizational culture, community engagement, and transportation service delivery, providing actionable strategies to build a more inclusive and accessible transportation system for all Santa Cruz County residents.

While the RTC is making progress in advancing equity work, the agency does not embed equity into all its projects, programs, and internal actions, including employees' day-to-day work. The RTC serves a diverse community and as such, we must continue to improve our understanding of institutional racism and historical regional inequities, and their implications for our transportation network and services, planning, and engagement processes.

We face challenges in ensuring cultural understanding and humility when engaging with the public, including with people who have different travel needs from our employees—or while discussing difficult topics internally. Via this Equity Plan, the RTC commits to providing guidance through policies, trainings, and community leadership to embed equity into the RTC's culture.

Near Term Actions

There are several near-term and easily attainable actions informed by TJC's Equity
Discovery Report that the RTC can implement with minimal structural or budgetary impact.
The following items are directly quoted from the report for clarity and alignment.

Replace Gendered Language in Policies: "All instances of 'his/her' should be changed
to 'their' to ensure gender inclusivity..."
 Action: The RTC is already in the process of updating its policy and procedure
documents to reflect the latest state and federal requirements and will implement this

change across HR and administrative documents.

- Update Job Descriptions to Include ADEI Responsibilities: "Update job descriptions
 to include explicit ADEI responsibilities and expectations."

 Action: HR staff will incorporate ADEI language during routine job description updates
 or prior to posting job announcements. HR can use a standard equity clause to ensure
 consistency.
- 3. Implement Blind Application Review Process: "Implement a blind review process for initial application screenings by redacting identifying information..."
 Action: This can be piloted manually by HR—removing names, schools, and locations from resumes before review. No software is needed to begin.
- 4. **Reserve Professional Development Funds for Underrepresented Staff:** "Reserve a portion of professional development funds specifically for staff from underrepresented groups."

Action: Reallocate a small percentage of existing training funds and establish transparent criteria for access. This can be managed through a simple internal application process.

- 5. Clarify and Communicate RTP Goals in Meetings: "Make the RTP goals a standing fixture of every meeting and a part of every project plan."
 Action: Include a section to staff reports, a standing slide or agenda item to board and Committee meetings describing how items advance RTP goals, which include equity-focused goals. This requires no new resources and reinforces alignment with agency goals.
- 6. **Implement Structured Mediation Protocols:** "The RTC should implement a structured mediation protocol to ensure accountability in using the agreed upon working norms."

Action: Adapt existing HR procedures or use a simple flowchart to guide cultural understanding and conflict resolution. This can be introduced during a staff meeting or retreat.

Additional Goals and Actions:

3.1 Improve internal procedures, guidelines, and leadership to advance equity efforts

Recommended actions include:

a. Establish an Internal Equity Committee

Establish a committee, comprised of employees from multiple levels of the organization, to meet regularly to lead equity and nondiscrimination efforts and evaluate implementation of the RTC's Equity Action Plan and Nondisrimination Plan. A fundamental role of the committee is to help plan the operationalization of the actions within these RTC plans. The committee should rotate leadership to ensure various perspectives are represented and to share the workload. Within one year, the RTC should further representation or regular input from Board members and provide stipends to community representatives to help with implementation and accountability.

b. Develop Specific Equity Policies and Procedures

Incorporate equity in policies, guidelines, and procedures; including new policies, guidelines, and procedures needed to advance equity. To help achieve this, the RTC has hired consultants to assist in updating RTC policies and procedures. RTC policies and procedures should be reviewed and evaluated at least biennially by staff.

c. Incorporate Equity Policies and Procedures into RTC Operations

Each RTC program should develop annual operational work plans to guide their work to accomplish the goals of the RTC. Department directors will ensure each operational plan incorporates goals and actions of this Equity Plan and the RTC's Nondiscrimination Plan, including adhering to resulting equity policies and procedures.

3.2 Increase staff understanding of racial equity principles and commit to the following actions:

a. Set and Track Equity Goals

 Develop a protocol for yearly equity-focused goal setting, using the Equity Plan as a guidepost for areas of improvement • Develop a staff survey that identifies growth in understanding of antiracism, racial and social equity, and community engagement. The survey results will help inform decisions about Equity Plan implementation.

b. Continue Training Staff, Board, and Committee Members

- Provide trainings at least annually to staff to support effective and respectful discussions about racial and social equity issues facing the RTC.
- Each employee shall also attend trainings that build cultural awareness and competency, including trainings that provide best practices for the projects they work on, such as planning, capital project development, budgeting, human resources, and engagement. This may include additional training on how to effectively and respectfully navigate conversations about racial equity in the workplace.
- Train New Employees: The RTC will provide training on equity best practices and cultural awareness and competency for all newly hired employees.
- Seek Training from Community Leaders: Engage with organizations based in and serving the communities facing the greatest need to educate RTC staff on cultural competency and best engagement practices.

c. Increase Team Building Opportunities

Include support for agency-wide team-building sessions and interactive workshops that focus on personal relationships to build an inclusive work environment.

d. Bring Diverse Perspectives to the RTC board

Evaluate mechanisms to bring more diverse perspectives and decision-makers to the Commission that reflect the diversity of Santa Cruz County.

3.3 Enhance the RTC's Capacity to Address Equity

Challenges

The RTC needs support and direction for staff to more readily and easily incorporate equity and community engagement into their full workloads. Many of the goals and actions identified in this Equity Plan are relatively new and are not yet broadly integrated into all the RTC's work. As such, the RTC will need to enhance its capacity to implement the Transportation Equity Action Plan and companion Nondiscrimination Plan.

Actions



To help reduce workload impacts of implementing the RTC's equity work, the RTC commits to the following actions:

a. Dedicate Staff to Lead Equity Efforts

The RTC will dedicate staffing to lead equity efforts, support Commissioners and advisory committees, and help staff implement the Equity Plan strategies. This work will be led by the RTC's new Internal Services Director position, with the support of the Executive Director, Planning Director, staff, and the Commission.

b. Dedicate Sufficient Resources to Address Equity

Dedicate specific funding and staffing resources towards community engagement, relationship-building with community representatives, and Equity Plan implementation. Staff will reevaluate periodically to ensure there is sufficient resources.

c. Provide Project Funding for Equity-Focused Community Engagement

To provide additional support for employees designing and implementing projects, the RTC will ensure that project budgets include funding for equity-focused community outreach. This may include additional funds for language interpretation and translation, and design and distribution of information in ways that will reach communities facing the greatest inequities. Additional engagement recommendations are shown in the RTC's Equity Outreach and Engagement Toolkit (Appendix x) and actions 4 and 5.

d. Overcome Language Access Barriers

While the RTC has several bilingual Spanish-speaking staff available to provide information and discuss projects in Spanish, the RTC must make additional progress to overcome language access barriers.

- Provide interpretation and translation services in Spanish at board meetings and workshops.
- Hold workshops and meetings in Spanish on major projects and policy actions.
- Increase the number of RTC documents available in Spanish, including outreach and agenda materials. Track requests for information in languages other than English and consider additional language services for the community, including American Sign Language.

3.4 Improve Equity in Hiring and Retention

Challenges



As an agency that serves local community members and visitors from around the State and world, the RTC should continue to work to diversify its internal demographics to better reflect the diversity of the Santa Cruz County. This goal and challenge are intimately tied with other goals. The RTC's staff and Board do not reflect the diversity of Santa Cruz County, though it has improved in recent years.

Santa Cruz County has a population of approximately 260,000 people, with 51% identifying as white (not Latino/Hispanic), 36.37% identifying as Latino/Hispanic, 4.88% Asian, 1.36% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 1.18% Black/African American, and 20% some other race (https://www.datasharescc.org, 2025). 15% identify as two or more races,

Based on a winter 2024/25 survey of 20 RTC staff, 65% identified as white (not Latino or Hispanic), 25% Latino or Hispanic, 15% Asian or Southeast Asian, and 5% declined to state. 10% identified as two or more races.

Of 8 board members that provided responses to a February 2025 survey, 86% identified as white and 14% identified as Latino or Hispanic.

Disparities between the demographics of the RTC and the demographics of the community it serves could result in inequities. One example is that it may lead to cultural insensitivity or micro aggressions towards employees who identify as Black, Brown, Indigenous, people of color, multi-lingual or bicultural, and persons experiencing financial insecurity.

Actions

To improve recruitment and hiring, and to support staff career development and retention, particularly for staff from diverse backgrounds, the RTC commits to the following actions:

a. Improve Recruitment

Create a recruitment strategy to better attract Latino, bilingual, Spanish-speaking, and candidates from communities facing the greatest inequities, including students at the local community colleges and high schools. This could include expanding internship opportunities, presenting information about transportation-related careers at high schools and community colleges, and hosting "Lunch and Learns" or similar casual learning opportunities to connect with and support potential employees.

b. Support Alternative Employee Pathways

Create connections with local community organizations, schools, colleges, nonprofits, or other agencies that have feeder programs or pathways to public service and environmental employment for priority populations, such as Black,

Brown, Indigenous, People of Color, multi-lingual, and persons experiencing financial insecurity.

c. Remove Implicit Bias

Remove implicit bias in hiring practices, including redacting names and other identifying information from applications, and standardizing evaluation scores for applicants.

d. Job Announcements

Within all job announcements and descriptions, require that a minimum of 5% of an employee's duties be dedicated to equity work.

e. Retention

Reevaluate and develop retention strategies that create a culture of inclusivity and address historical racial, cultural, and gender bias. An agency's culture must be welcoming and supportive of all its employees to thrive.

f. Onboarding/Offboarding

Create an onboarding framework that provides a mentorship or buddy system for new hires. Ensure that the offboarding process includes questions about equity at the RTC and any experiences that can inform progress or areas of needed growth. For the Board, include equity training as part of Board onboarding practices.

g. Employee Evaluation

Include equity-related goals in employee performance reviews and individual development plans. Evaluate the impact of cost-of-living increases on staff and to the extent possible, continue to offer creative solutions to retain employees such as flexible work options and bilingual pay differentials.

4. Embed Equity in Project Development and Resource Allocation

There are a variety of ways that an agency can embed equity in transportation project development and resource allocation. Some of the flexible processes and a set of tools that can be practiced by the RTC and other transportation entities include:

a. **Prioritize investments** that serve low-income residents. These include public transit, pedestrian infrastructure, and bicycle facilities, maintaining rural roads, and reducing travel times between Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Incorporate equity lenses into transportation projects and services countywide by embedding equity

- considerations for project development, nomination, and selection processes into funding programs and guidance.
- b. **Community-driven design**: Create designs and solutions that focus on equity priority communities. Tap the experience and expertise of local communities to illuminate all design phases.
- c. Community engagement Listen & Learn: Listen to residents, advisory committees and local governments to identify challenges and deliver solutions. Increase opportunities for people most affected by exclusion and shift decision-making power to the people who are affected by policies. Invest resources and build trust to ensure historically underrepresented communities can meaningfully influence decision-making.
- d. **Communications & marketing**: Set up regular, ongoing, varied and culturally specific communications to reach community members at their convenience.
- e. **Project delivery Focus & Deliver**: Complete promised projects that reflect community input. Invest in training and education to advance fairness and inclusion.
- f. **Project evaluation Define & Measure**: Use evidence-based, data-driven research that values both lived experience and technical results. Use success metrics to advance transparency and accountability and measure whether or not policies are succeeding. Some of the equity metrics used to evaluate local transportation project benefits are described in the next chapter.

Equitable practices should be considered throughout a project's lifecycle (planning, development, and delivery). This can include structural strategies that reform planning practices to create inclusive, affordable, and resource-efficient transportation infrastructure, as well as procedural strategies that provide special benefits to disadvantaged groups to create fairness in process. Mindful and meaningful inclusion and engagement are critical to successfully advance equity in transportation planning as well as project development and delivery.

Priority Investments

How transportation projects are funded and where resources are allocated are critical aspects of transportation equity. Transportation funding has traditionally prioritized projects which disproportionately benefited wealthier suburban communities. When developing a project or program, agencies should explain how a project advances transportation equity from identification and inclusion to impacts and outcomes.

Equity Metrics for Evaluating Transportation Projects

The RTC, Caltrans, and local agencies use a variety of methods to identify and prioritize transportation projects and services. The following metrics can be used to evaluate transportation projects based on the extent to which they directly advance the needs of equity priority communities. Equity evaluation metrics can also be used to evaluate the potential effects of transportation projects on equity priority communities, ensuring that they do not exacerbate existing disparities. These are not meant to replace all other metrics used by the RTC and others to evaluate the best use of transportation funding, but should be considered when working to advance more equitable outcomes for our communities.

The following metrics, adapted from the *Transportation Equity Needs Assessment Toolkit* published by the Center for Transportation Equity, Decisions and Dollars, score project based on how well they address categories:

- Access to Opportunity
- Health and Environment
- Safety and Emergency Evacuation
- Affordability
- Mobility
- Burdens
- Community Engagement

Access to Opportunity

Access to opportunity considers the ability of target populations to reach employment locations, educational facilities, and other community services using different forms of transportation and at different times of the day. Transportation equity in this case is also clearly tied to land-use planning decisions and housing affordability. To improve access to opportunity, government agencies can: a) take steps to provide or relocate opportunities and services near underserved populations (such as the new South County Government Center opened in Watsonville in 2024), and b) improve transit service and bicycle and pedestrian connections to activity centers.

Factors that can affect access to opportunity include:

- Modal options availability of a range of modes (e.g. transit, driving, biking, carpooling), affordability, safety, and convenience.
- Transportation network connectivity network density and connection between modes.
- Land use proximity the distance between activity locations, as well as land use density and mix.

Access to opportunity is grouped into three main factors: access to employment, access to education, and access to community services and facilities as shown in Table 1 and 2. The objective is to make access to opportunity for underserved populations a priority in project selection.

Table 1. Access to Opportunity Factors and Criteria

	Employment	Project improves access to employment opportunities.
Access to Opportunity	Education	Project improves access to educational opportunities (e.g., higher education, job training, schools, daycare, after school programs).
	Community Services and Shopping	Project improves access to community services, including parks and recreational areas, and shopping areas.

Table 2. Access to Opportunity Weighted Criteria

Access to Opportunity	Employment	Connects and/or significantly increases availability of safe and affordable travel options to major employers or areas with a high job density; or significantly decreases walking, biking, or transit travel time to a high job density location.
	Education	Connects high percent of students and/or significantly increases availability of safe and affordable travel options to educational facilities; or significantly decreases walking, biking, or transit travel time to large educational facilities.
	Community Services and Shopping	Connects and/or significantly increases availability of safe and affordable travel options to nearby parks, recreational facilities, shopping areas, and other community services. Or significantly decreases walking, biking, or transit travel time to community services and shopping areas.

Health and Environment

Transportation decisions have significant public health and environmental consequences. Transportation choices can impact obesity, heart disease, and blood pressure levels, and

mental health, as well as impact air quality and asthma levels. Active transportation (walking, cycling and riding the bus) support physical activity that can help reduce these negative health factors. Projects that reduce the number of miles driven (VMT) and replace gas and diesel vehicles with alternative fuels and electric vehicles can reduce vehicular emissions that are harmful to public health.

For the scorecard, health and environment are grouped into three main factors: health care, healthy food, and environment, as shown in Table 3 and Table 4. Each factor advances a specific objective, such as improving access to health care services. The criteria aim to improve connectivity and accessibility to health care services and healthy food and improve livability through the built environment.

Table 3. Health and Environment Factors and Criteria

Health Care Health Food Environment Environment	Health Care	Project improves access to health care services.
	Healthy Food	Project connects to grocery stores or markets that provide healthy and fresh food at affordable prices.
	Project increases livability (e.g., community cohesion, streetscaping, green infrastructure, etc.) through design and/or mitigation measures.	

Table 4. Health and Environment Weighted Criteria

	Health Care	Connects and/or significantly increases availability of safe and affordable travel options to a hospital or other health care facilities; or significantly decreases walking, biking, or transit travel time to a hospital or other health care centers. Or significantly improves public health in areas where residents have health outcome disparities, including asthma, obesity, or diabetes.
Health and Environment	Healthy Food	Connects and/or significantly increases availability of safe and affordable travel options to a fresh produce market or grocery store or community gardens; or significantly decreases walking, biking, or transit travel time to a fresh produce market or grocery store.

Environment	Significantly reduces noise level, emission rate, or vehicle miles traveled, and/or accomplishes two or more of the following: Reinforces community cohesion Improves landscaping and/or includes green infrastructure Provides street furniture Provides LED or solar lighting Incorporates art or cultural amenities
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Safety and Emergency Evacuation

Transportation safety and emergency evacuation are fundamental to the health and wellbeing of transportation system users. High crash locations often correspond with locations of equity priority communities. Emergency evacuation (e.g., flood or fire) is especially important in high-hazard areas with vulnerable populations, including communications.

This Transportation Equity Scorecard groups safety into two factors – improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists at high-crash locations, and other safety improvements. The emergency evacuation criterion aims to prioritize emergency preparedness projects for funding in areas with a large concentration of equity priority communities. Table 5 shows the safety and emergency evacuation factors and criteria. Table 6 shows the weighted criteria for this category.

Table 5. Safety and Emergency Evacuation Factors and Criteria

Safety and Emergency Evacuation	Safety	Project improves safety for pedestrians and bicyclists at high-crash locations. Project improves safety at other (non-high crash) locations.
	Emergency Evacuation	Project improves emergency evacuation (e.g., transit coordination, connections to shelters, etc.).

Table 6. Safety and Emergency Evacuation Weighted Criteria

	Integrates two or more safety countermeasures, such as protected bicycle lanes, raised median islands, Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) or other signalized midblock crossing treatments, roundabouts, lane reductions, traffic calming, street lighting, etc.; or significantly decreases pedestrian and bicycle crash rates per capita.
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Emergency Evacuation	Safety	Integrates two or more safety countermeasures, such as protected bicycle lanes, raised median islands, Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) or other signalized midblock crossing treatments, roundabouts, lane reductions, traffic calming, street lighting, etc.; or significantly decreases crash rates per capita.
	Emergency Evacuation	Connects and/or significantly decreases travel time to safe areas or shelters.

Affordability

Housing and transportation are the two largest categories of average household expenditures. Areas with a rich array of transportation options often lack affordable housing and affordable housing near employment locations and activity centers is particularly scarce in some parts of Santa Cruz County.

The challenge associated with housing and transportation costs is particularly an issue for lower-income households and people of color. Racial and income inequalities exacerbate the already significant mismatch between affordable housing and access to safe and convenient transportation options. Affordability factors and criteria are highlighted in Table 7 and Table 8. For the scorecard, affordability is grouped into three factors: housing and transportation costs, housing, and transportation.

Table 7. Affordability Factors and Criteria

Affordability	Housing and Transportation Costs	Project decreases the share of household income consumed by transportation and housing.
	Housing	Project improves access to and from affordable housing.
	Transportation	Project increases availability of affordable transportation options.

Table 8. Affordability Weighted Criteria

	Housing and Transportation Costs	Reduces housing and transportation costs as a percentage of income to 30 percent or less.
Affordability	Housing	Provides direct connections to affordable housing through premium transit service, a protected bicycle facility, or new/connected sidewalks or shared use paths; or significantly decreases travel time to and from

	affordable housing.
Transportation	Provides premium and affordable transit or protected and connected bike facility or new/connected sidewalk or increases availability of high quality and affordable transportation options; or significantly decreases travel time to essential destinations and other activity locations.

Mobility

Although mobility overlaps with several other equity categories, it is treated as a separate category in the equity scorecard tool due to its broad impacts. For example, traffic delay and congestion, which are important mobility indicators, are also considered in the evaluation of access to jobs and services.

Quality and level of service (Q/LOS) are other measures to assess mobility impacts of the transportation system for the various modes. Equity and mobility can be improved through projects that reduce travel time for transit and single-occupancy vehicles, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and provide or supplement active transportation options available to underserved populations.

The mobility category includes three factors: active transportation, transit access, and ADA, as shown in Table 9 and Table 10. Active transportation also advances health and the environment; as a result, the evaluation of the active transportation criterion should consider health and environmental factors.

Table 9. Mobility Factors and Criteria

Mobility	Active Transportation	Project improves or expands bicycle or pedestrian facilities.
	Transit Access and Service	Project improves transit service and/or access, including first- and last-mile access.
	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	Project improves accessibility for persons with disabilities (e.g., transit stops, ADA curb ramps, audio-visual signals, driveway grade, etc.).

Table 10. Mobility Weighted Criteria

Mobility	Active Transportation	Adds new bicycle or pedestrian facilities, fills gaps in existing network, or improves quality of existing facilities, especially those identified as priorities in Active Transportation Plans or other plans.
	Transit Access	Increases transit service, reduces transit travel times,
	and Service	improves access to stops by bike, walk, or park-and ride.

Burdens

Although the focus of these metrics is on identifying projects the serve the needs of equity priority communities, an analysis of the equity implications of project proposals would be incomplete without an evaluation of potential burdens. Examples of burdens include cumulative or disproportionate impacts, barriers, safety hazards, and increased noise or emissions.

Cumulative impacts consider the incremental direct and indirect effects of a project or plan, the effects of past and present actions, and effects of reasonably foreseeable future actions. Disproportionate impacts are defined as extensive differences in impacts or risks across population groups.

Barriers include any physical obstacles, such as major multi-lane roadways, that dissect communities and lessen community cohesion. These barriers relate to several of the equity assessment categories, including access to opportunity, health and environment, safety and emergency evacuation, and mobility. Noise pollution and emissions are related to the health and environment category and also warrant inclusion as a burden due to their potential to cause long-term negative impacts on underserved communities.

Transportation agencies weigh the adverse impacts, others take steps to mitigate these impacts. In the scorecard, burdens are given a score of negative ten (-10) or negative twenty (-20), ensuring that projects with significant adverse impacts are not prioritized higher than projects with minimal or no adverse impacts.

The burdens category has one factor, "adverse impacts". Specific criteria for each agency will vary based on project type, geography, historic trends, public input, and other details unique to the project and the target population. Project information and other data can be used to create a list of projects and community-specific burdens. Table 11 shows the factor and criterion related to burdens. Table 12 shows the weighted criteria for the burdens category.

Table 11. Burdens Factor and Criterion

Burdens Adverse Imp	acts	Project causes cumulative, disproportionate, or other major adverse impacts.
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Table 12. Burdens Weighted Criteria

Burdens	Adverse Impacts	Leads to one or more of the following: 1. Significant barrier effects (e.g., widen from 4 to 6 lanes, high speed, increases traffic volumes, grade separation, etc.) 2. Significant cumulative/disproportionate impacts 3. Increases displacement of residents, businesses, or public amenities 4. Reduces business revenue and employment (e.g., by relocating businesses) 5. Greatly increases noise or emissions 6. Reduces safety and personal security
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Community Engagement

Equitable projects must demonstrate meaningful and effective public participation in decision-making processes, particularly by the communities that will be impacted. Consistent with the California Transportation Commission's *Transportation Equity Supplement* project sponsors should consider and provide responses to the following questions as they plan, develop, and implement projects:

- How did the project sponsor engage communities in the project study area to identify their needs? Did the agency directly engage with communities that may be impacted and marginalized groups, including Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, displaced or unhoused persons, individuals with disabilities, seniors and elders, and low-income individuals or communities? How was community feedback incorporated into the project? How did the agency inform communities about whether their feedback was incorporated into the project?
- How did the agency develop the project scope? Were alternatives developed that include community feedback? Can the agency demonstrate its partnership and collaboration with the equity priority communities in the project area?
- If the project will cause any disparate impacts on the basis of race, color, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, disability status, or national origin, did the agency discuss with the community and consider and incorporate alternate options?

Priority Projects

Throughout development of this plan, the RTC solicited input from community and board members and evaluated the equity benefits projects proposed for the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and 2025 Consolidated Grants program. Some of the projects and types of projects that were identified as priorities to reduce disparities and create a vibrant transportation network that equitably supports the community, economic activity and preservation of the environment are listed below. The RTC is starting to apply the more detailed equity factors and criteria described above. the RTC has started evaluating the potential effects of transportation and decisions: projects, programs, and services. The following are some of the projects that have been identified as priorities through that analysis and/or by equity priority communities. This list is not exhaustive and will be updating as the RTC conducts a more detailed evaluation of projects proposed for RTC discretionary funding, grant applications, and planning work.

Generally, the following types of projects will reduce disparities:

- Projects that reduce emissions, fuel consumption, and congestion
- Projects that reduce exposure to truck traffic through neighborhoods
- Transit Projects that increase:
 - Transit service
 - Reduce transit travel times
 - Reduce "last mile" distances especially to key destinations.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian: Fill gaps in bike/ped network in low-income areas and to key
 destinations, including access to healthy recreational activities that improve quality
 of life, especially for "captive" pedestrians and bicyclists who walk or bike because
 no other options exist.
- Fill Potholes and repair roadways
- EV transition
 - EV Cars Charging infrastructure, solar, and used EV rebates
 - EV buses and shuttles (METRO and Lift Line)
 - EV carshare
 - EV trucks and trailers
- Safety:
 - Prioritize counter measures that address fatal and injury collisions, especially for people walking and biking, youth, and seniors
 - o Reduce DUI incidences
- Reduce climate impacts, especially heat and flooding.
 - Support resiliency for rivers, creeks, and key transportation corridors to prevent people from being cutoff during extreme weather events.

 Plant trees to address extreme heat and make it easier and safer for people to walk, bike, and take transit – especially in Watsonville where tree canopy is less than 10%

Community-Identified Priorities

The following is a list of <u>some</u> of the priority projects that were identified during Transportation Equity Action Plan public engagement efforts. Engagement efforts were focused in the Watsonville area and this list is not exhaustive. Local agencies and the RTC should regularly refer to community-based plans, including but not limited to Local Roadway Safety Plans and Vision Zero plans, Active Transportation Plans, Safe Routes to Schools plans, Watsonville Downtown Specific Plan, Highway 9/SLV Complete Streets Plan, Rural Highway Safety Plan, and General Plans.

Watsonville Area

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety target high injury locations, including:
 - Main Street/Highway 152
 - Riverside Drive/Highway 129
 - West Beach Street
 - Airport Boulevard
 - Freedom Boulevard

Bicycle Facilities:

- Bike boulevard through downtown Watsonville: temporary slow street parallel to Main Street/SR152 and East Lake/SR129 through downtown Watsonville
- Green Valley: buffered/protected bike lanes (Airport to Freedom)
- Lake/East Lake Ave: Protected bike facilities (see SRTS plan)
- E-bikeshare
- Bicycle subsidies: expand eligibility to include used and new bicycles

Pedestrian:

- Daylighting at intersections, especially any areas with history of pedestrian injuries.
 May include traffic calming parklets, planters or pilons
- Tree planting to address heat islands and to make heat less of an issue for walking, biking, and waiting for buses. Partner with Watsonville Wetlands Watch, to also include bioswells, demonstration gardens.
- Crosswalk painting, lighting, and beacons on Main Street, Freedom Boulevard, and other locations identified as priorities in Vision Zero/Safe Streets for All plans
- Main Street (Green Valley to Rodriguez): Traffic Calming / Pedestrian safety
- Freedom Blvd: Reduce the number of driveways from Airport Blvd to Main Street to reduce conflict points.
- Pennsylvania Dr from Winding Way/Willowcreek St to Clifford Ave: Repair damaged pedestrian path and damaged bike lane.

Alleyway placemaking – clean up, activities, public art

Trails:

- Trails to the Beach: Pajaro River Levee and Beach Street
- MBSST Network Segments 17-21 connecting downtown Watsonville, Pajaro Station, Beaches and other recreational destinations

Multimodal/Traffic Calming:

- Slow down cars near schools, parks, and apartment complexes, including Pinto Lake, Green Valley Road, Buena Vista Drive, Freedom School.
- Union/Brennan Traffic calming ideas chicanes (See Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan
- Parking removal to improve circulation. Develop a Pilot Project to test locations for removal.

Transit:

- Watsonville Transit Center: Transit Oriented Development, including affordable housing
- Bus stop upgrades/parklets transform area next to a heavily used bus stops to a
 parklet in order to create more space for people waiting for the bus, include seating,
 shade trees, other plants, public art, activities. Add covered bus stops on Airport
 Boulevard and other locations with limited tree coverage, including at the Hospital.
 (See AC Transit parklet study)
- Summer Beach Shuttle Pilot: Provide transit access from Watsonville to the Beach (Sunset State Beach, Pajaro Dunes areas)
- Restore Bus Routes 75, 78 and 91X
- Shuttle service from downtown Watsonville to Ohlone and to GreyBears, Santa Cruz, 41st Avenue shops, Rio Del Mar, and West Cliff Drive
- Youth microtransit/shuttles to provide access to educational and cultural opportunities

Traffic Circulation

- Freedom/Main Roundabout or extend left turn lanes
- Extend/lengthen left turn lane, including on Main Street at Ramsey Park and Target shopping centers.
- Non-Infrastructure: Student education programs focused on bicycle and pedestrian safety, bicycle repair clinics, anti-DUI campaign, community bicycle rides
- Equity Workgroup members expressed preference for permanent projects over onetime events.
- Extend bus-on-shoulder facilities (not just at interchanges) and add carpool lanes on Highway 1 for people commuting from Watsonville to Santa Cruz
- Roadway maintenance

Target roadways in low income neighborhoods

Santa Cruz Area

- Improve, enhance, or install intersection and segment lighting throughout the City
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety target high injury locations, with an additional focus on unhoused populations:
 - Ocean Street
 - Highway 9/Highway 1 Intersection
 - Soquel Avenue and Soquel Drive
 - Laurel Street
 - Front Street
 - Morrissey/Water/Soquel "triangle"

Capitola

 Bay Avenue in Capitola traffic calming, circulation, bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements

Mid-County

- Soquel Drive Multimodal Improvements: Transit priority signals, buffered bicycle lanes, fill gaps in sidewalks, add more pedestrian crossing safety measures at intersections.
- Rio Del Mar: Seacliff State Beach trail difficult to access on wheelchare

Countywide

- Transit:
 - Extend bus-on-shoulder facilities (not just at interchanges) and add carpool lanes on Highway 1 for people commuting from Watsonville/Aptos to Santa Cruz
 - Buses to SJC Airport from Watsonville and Santa Cruz
 - Bus depots: Make it easier to figure out where to wait for buses, show what bus numbers will be when parked, rather than waiting until driver gets on bus.
 - Improve safety on buses and bus stops.
 - Bus Driver Training: new drivers are not as friendly, need better training on kneeling bus
 - Provide free bus passes to seniors and low-income residents. Free passes for students is great, but extend to others.
- Roadway Maintenance
 - Gutter and curb ramp improvements to prevent flooding at intersections, especially an issue for pedestrians. (Kerney St/Rodriguez in Watsonville and others)

Setting Priorities

• Community-Based Transportation Plans: Create a pilot program with a participatory budgeting component for one or more neighborhoods, in which residents are given

- assistance to assess their community transportation needs, develop ideas for meaningful improvements, and given a lump sum of funding to spend on their chosen priorities.
- Micro-Grants: Set aside a portion of consolidated grant funds for a micro-grants program for projects serving equity priority communities and neighborhood

Glossary of Equity Terms

Definitions from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) unless otherwise specified. Don't see the word you're looking for? Check out:

https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

Anti-racism: The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life.

Bias: Prejudice toward one group and its members relative to another group.

Co-creation: The collaborative development of new value (concepts, solutions, products and services) together with subject matter experts and community stakeholders working together as peers. Co-creation is a form of collaborative innovation where ideas are shared and improved together through all stages of a process, from ideation to vetting to implementation. Unlike crowdsourcing (a widespread call to contribute focused on quantity vs. quality), co-creation engages a small but representative group of community stakeholders. The process of co-creation generates richer and deeper knowledge while cultivating community buy-in and sense of ownership. Last but not least, co-creation provides an opportunity to deepen the relationships we have with passengers and the community at large.

Community Indicator: The means by which we can measure socioeconomic conditions in the community. All community indicators should be disaggregated by race, if possible.

Contracting Equity: Investments in contracting, consulting, and procurement should benefit the communities a jurisdiction serves, proportionate to the jurisdictions demographics.

Diversity: The range of physical, social, and psychological differences between people and groups, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, tribe, national origin, socioeconomic status, religious or ethical values systems, political beliefs, thinking and communication styles.

Equity: Fairness in process, distribution of resources, opportunity and provision of varying levels of support, based upon need to achieve greater fairness of outcomes. Includes just and fair inclusion in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Ethnicity: A social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, history and customs.



Explicit bias: Biases that people are aware of and that operate consciously. Individuals express them directly.

Implicit bias: Biases people are usually unaware of and that operate at the subconscious level. Implicit bias is usually expressed indirectly.

Inclusion[†]: Involvement and empowerment, where everyone feels welcomed, respected, supported and valued. Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Individual racism: Pre-judgement, bias, bigotry or discrimination based on race by an individual.

Institutional racism: Policies or practices that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

Intersectionality‡: The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. When it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.

Microaggression¶: The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Performance Measure: Performance measures are at the county, department, or program level. Appropriate performance measures allow monitoring of the success of implementation of actions that have a reasonable chance of influencing indicators and contributing to results. Performance measures respond to three different levels: 1) Quantity—how much did we do?; 2) Quality—how well did we do it?; and 3) Is anyone better off? A mix of these types of performance measures is contained within the recommendations.

Power sharing: A system of governance in which all major segments of society receive a permanent share of power.

Race: A social construct that categorizes people based on physical characteristics and ancestry to justify inequitable distribution of resources and power.

Racial equity: Eliminating race-based outcome gaps so that race cannot be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved. This approach centers



those who are worse off and moves from a service-based approach toward focusing on policies, institutions and structures.

Racial inequity: Outcome gaps between people of different races based on historical or current factors or structures that benefit white people more than people of color. e.g., disproportionality in education (high school graduation rates), jobs (unemployment rate), criminal justice (arrest and incarceration rates), etc.

Structural racism: A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively affects communities of color.

White privilege: The unearned, mostly unacknowledged social advantage white people have over other racial groups simply because they are white.

White supremacy culture: The dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. While these standards may appear mainstream, dominant cultural practices, they have evolved from the United States' history of white supremacy.

White supremacy: The idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs and actions of white people are superior to people of color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs and action.

Workforce Equity: The workforce of a jurisdiction reflects the diversity of its residents, including across the breadth (functions and departments) and depth (hierarchy) of government.

† Racial Equity Tools Glossary; Opensource Leadership Strategies

The Equity Manifesto, PolicyLink

‡ Merriam-Webster Dictionary; Adia Harvey Wingfield

¶ Racial Equity Tools Glossary; Derald Wing Sue, PhD, "Microaggressions: More than Just Race" (Psychology Today, 17 November 2010). Glossary of Terms



Appendix A: Equitable Outreach and Engagement Toolkit

When we find solutions that work for those most vulnerable in our communities, we find solutions that work better for everyone.

Introduction

Advancing Equitable Public Engagement

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is committed to incorporating meaningful public engagement strategies into all of its planning and project development processes to ensure our decision making is well informed. It is vital that the people we serve have a voice in shaping the transportation projects and programs that affect their daily lives. Meaningful public engagement leads to better decisions, more responsive projects, and stronger public trust. It is how we remain accountable, transparent, and aligned with the real needs of our communities.

Meaningful public engagement must also be equitable. Not all community members have had equal opportunities to participate in the decisions that shape their neighborhoods, especially those in low-income, underserved, or non-English-speaking communities. These community members offer unique perspectives on the needs of their communities, and they have vast knowledge of the community's strengths and weaknesses. However, too often these essential voices go unheard due to longstanding barriers in access, trust, and communication. This often leads to projects that fail to address their specific needs and sometimes exacerbate existing inequities. Investing in meaningful and inclusive engagement fosters a more equitable and thriving future for all residents.

Rooted in our agency's mission to develop and deliver transportation solutions for a vibrant, sustainable, and equitable community, the RTC has developed this Equitable Outreach and Engagement Toolkit to ensure the community engagement strategies we design and carry out are equitable, inclusive, and responsive, and are guided by our Principles of Public Participation.

Guiding Principles for Public Participation:

- 1. **Welcome everyone.** Use ways of reaching out that make all people feel included, especially communities that have had fewer chances or resources in the past.
- 2. **Value people's voices.** Everyone's ideas matter and support different people with different life experiences to be involved.
- 3. **Give many chances to share.** Offer different ways for people to share ideas, give feedback, ask questions, and review plans.
- 4. **Be fair and respectful.** Listen carefully to all comments and concerns.

- 5. **Work together.** Support open conversations and teamwork between residents, business owners, groups, and government staffs.
- 6. **Include underserved equity priority communities.** Make sure people and groups who are often less involved are invited and supported.
- 7. **Invite participation at every step.** Encourage the public to be involved from the beginning to the end of the project.
- 8. **Share clear and timely information.** Provide easy-to-understand updates and reports to the community on a regular basis.

Using the Toolkit

This comprehensive resource includes practical tips, strategies and best practices that can be used to effectively reach and empower those historically excluded from civic processes. With a focus on equitable outreach, inclusive communication, and meaningful engagement, this toolkit aims to foster stronger connections and collaboration with the diverse communities we serve.

Developed with adaptability in mind, this toolkit can be used by other public agencies and community partners seeking to strengthen their equitable and inclusive outreach efforts. Whether you're planning a single project or building a long-term engagement framework, this toolkit is intended to serve as a roadmap for:

- **Promoting equity** by ensuring all voices—especially those from disadvantaged communities—are heard, respected, and reflected in government decisions.
- **Increasing participation** by removing barriers and providing multiple culturally-relevant ways for people to engage.
- **Improving project outcomes** by designing solutions grounded in the real needs and experiences of diverse community members.
- **Building trust and collaboration** through consistent, transparent, and meaningful dialogue with the public.

We invite you to use it not just as a checklist—but as a commitment to listen more deeply, engage more intentionally, and build lasting relationships to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

Chapter 1 - Setting Goals and Objectives

Establishing clear goals and measurable objectives is essential to developing a successful and equitable community engagement plan. Goals will help define the purpose of your outreach, while objectives will provide a roadmap for how success will be measured. When grounded in equity, these goals ensure that engagement efforts prioritize inclusivity, amplify underrepresented voices, and lead to more just and community-informed outcomes.

Define Specific Outreach Goals

Start by defining why you are engaging the community and what your desired end goals are. Goals should reflect both the purpose of the project and the agency's commitment to equity.

Examples of equity-centered outreach goals:

- Increase visibility and presence in underrepresented areas by hosting more outreach events in priority neighborhoods identified by income, race/ethnicity, or access to services.
- Increase meeting attendance of residents from low-income or non-English-speaking communities.
- Work with more community-based organizations in low-income and underserved neighborhoods to co-develop outreach strategies and partner on dissemination of information.
- Build long-term trust with historically excluded communities through transparent, responsive engagement.

Establish Measurable Objectives

Create objectives that are actionable and trackable. This can help ensure your objectives are realistic and clear.

Examples of objectives:

- Host at least three community meetings in underserved neighborhoods within the next six months.
- Table at six community events or pop-up locations during the outreach period.
- Attend and participate in meetings of at least 3-5 existing community-based organizations serving underrepresented communities to share project information and build trust.
- Distribute bilingual project flyers to at least 500 households in targeted areas by the end of the outreach period.
- Increase survey response rates among Spanish-speaking residents by 25% compared to the previous outreach effort.

A checklist that staff and partners can use when developing engagement goals and objectives to ensure they are intentional, actionable, and equity focused is included in Chapter 4-Resources.

Chapter 2 – Equitable Outreach and Engagement Best Practices

Building a truly inclusive and engaged community requires reaching all residents, regardless of background, income level, or ability. This means moving beyond traditional outreach methods and embracing an equitable outreach strategy to ensure every resident has a voice. These best practices will guide your equitable engagement efforts while fostering a more inclusive and engaged community.

A. Developing Outreach Strategies

Tailor Outreach Methods to Target Audiences

Community members from underserved or marginalized communities may not all have access to digital platforms or may rely on other forms of communication (e.g., flyers, radio, word of mouth). Use various methods to reach them effectively.

Traditional Media:

 Utilize local newspapers (print/online), TV and radio (including multilingual options) for PSAs and targeted ads.

Digital Outreach:

- Utilize social media platforms relevant to target audiences with clear, concise messages.
- Send email newsletters with translated content.
- Maintain a user-friendly, accessible and multilingual website with up-to-date information.
- Utilize bilingual online surveys and interactive project resources

Printed Materials:

 Develop brochures, fact sheets, flyers, and posters with clear visuals and translated versions and distribute them in community centers, libraries, local businesses, etc.

• Community Events and Partnerships:

- Participate in local festivals and events to engage residents in familiar settings.
- Collaborate with community-based organizations on outreach and engagement efforts.

A list of local events and CBOs are included in Chapter 4. These lists will be shared with community-based organizations and regularly updated.

Utilize Culturally Appropriate Messaging and Language

- Understand and respect the diverse cultures within your community. Be mindful of cultural norms and communications styles and tailor outreach materials to resonate with specific communities and that respects cultural norms and values.
- Build relationships with culturally diverse community leaders and organizations. Leverage their expertise to develop culturally appropriate outreach strategies and materials.

Provide materials and interpretation in the primary languages spoken in the community.

Provide Multiple Avenues for Engagement

- Meetings: Host in-person meetings, workshops, town halls at accessible locations and times convenient for working families. Ensure engagement events are not held on any religious or cultural holidays or observances.
- **Surveys**: Offer both online and paper surveys in multiple languages. Make staff available to assist community members in completing the surveys if they need help, especially if tabling or at an outreach event.
- **Community Forums:** Organize community forums, focus groups and listening sessions in diverse neighborhoods.
- **Door-to-Door Outreach:** Utilize trusted community members for in-person outreach.
- Meet People Where They Are: Rather than expecting community members to come to a central office or public meeting, hold events in community centers, parks, places of worship, or schools in the communities you are trying to engage with.

B. Partner with Community Organizations and Community Leaders

Developing strong partnerships with community leaders and community-based organizations increases equitable outcomes, public participation, and can foster trust between the community and public agencies. These partners hold invaluable knowledge about the community's needs and dynamics, and their partnership can be key to successful engagement.

Identifying Key Stakeholders

- **Community Leaders:** Look beyond elected officials. Consider clergy, educators, cultural leaders, and respected elders who hold influence within specific communities.
- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): These non-profit organizations often work directly with low-income and disadvantaged residents, providing vital services and advocating for their needs. Partner with CBOs that align with your project's focus (e.g., housing, education, healthcare).
- Local Businesses: Many businesses, especially those with a long history in the community, have established relationships with residents. Partner with them and the local Chamber of Commerce to reach a wider audience and leverage their communication channels.
- **Religious Institutions:** Places of worship often serve as community hubs and trusted spaces for residents. Partner with them to host outreach events or disseminate information.
- **Community Groups:** Look for resident-led groups focused on specific issues or neighborhoods. These groups can provide valuable insights and help connect you directly with hard-to-reach populations.

Building Relationships

• **Proactive Engagement:** Enlist the assistance early on of trusted CBOs and leaders who are deeply connected to residents to identify community needs and priorities. Their insight

- ensures outreach is rooted in the community's lived experience and trust is built from the start.
- **Mutual Respect:** Acknowledge the expertise and experience of community partners. Treat them as collaborators, not simply conduits for information dissemination.
- Transparency and Open Communication: Be clear about project goals, potential impacts, and timelines. Attend CBOs meetings regularly to share updates, actively listen, and solicit feedback.
- **Demonstrate Commitment and Appreciation:** Maintain long-term relationships and collaboration. Follow up after projects and keep communication open year-round.

Collaboration Strategies

- **Joint Planning and Development:** Involve community partners in planning meetings and workshops to ensure projects address their priorities.
- **Culturally Appropriate Outreach:** Work with CBOs and community leaders to develop culturally sensitive outreach materials and communication strategies.
- Utilize Existing Networks: Leverage CBOs' and community leaders' connections to
 disseminate information through trusted channels, such as community newsletters or
 social media groups. Ask small businesses and faith-based organizations if you can post
 flyers or distribute surveys at these sites, especially in high-traffic areas like corner stores
 or community churches.
- **Joint Events:** Partner with CBOs and local businesses to host community events and popup engagement tables to provide information about a project and to offer a platform for open dialogue.

C. Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity

Outreach strategies should address known barriers to participation, ensuring that all community members are able to participate fully and meaningfully in the public process.

Addressing Language Barriers with Translation Services

- Ensure language barriers do not impede participation. Offer translated versions of website content, meeting materials and key documents and other materials—flyers, surveys, signage—in the primary languages spoken in the community.
- Hire bilingual staff or interpreters for meetings and events.
- Cultural context matters. Adapt messages so they resonate with the values and priorities of the communities you are engaging with.
- Have translated materials reviewed by native speakers familiar with local dialects and terminology.

Providing Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities

• Ensure all information and communication materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities (physical, sensory, cognitive, etc.). This includes providing documents in alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print, audio, video), and using accessible fonts, alt text for images, and clear and concise language.

- Consider accessibility of physical locations for meetings and events. Choose venues near public transportation and with ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, assistive listening devices, and seating for individuals using mobility aids.
- Offer American Sign Language interpreters and real-time captioning services for public meetings (in-person or virtual).

Offering Assistance and Incentives for Events

- Provide supervised childcare or children's activities at meetings and events so parents can participate meaningfully.
- Offer stipends or gift cards if applicable to incentivize public participation.
- Offer bus passes, shuttle services, parking vouchers, or gas cards to reduce barriers to inperson engagement.
- Provide light refreshments or meals at meetings and events that occur during mealtimes so that community members can participate without missing a meal.
- Provide options that make attending or participating in meetings easier for community members. For in-person meetings, hold meetings both during the day and in the evening to accommodate a wide range of schedules and availability in the community. Also consider incorporating a concurrent virtual option for in-person events and meetings.

D. Leverage Virtual Engagement Tools

Selecting Appropriate Digital Platforms

- Assess Community Access and Preferences: Before selecting digital tools, evaluate the community's access to technology and preferred communication channels. This ensures that chosen platforms are accessible and user-friendly for all participants.
- **Utilize Diverse Engagement Tools:** Incorporate a mix of platforms to cater to various engagement needs:
 - Survey Tools: Platforms like SurveyMonkey, ArcGIS Hub and MetroQuest facilitate the collection of community feedback on transportation projects.
 - o **Interactive Mapping:** Tools such as Community Remarks allow residents to provide location-specific input, enhancing spatial understanding of community concerns.
 - Virtual Meeting Platforms: Utilize Zoom or GoToMeeting for hosting virtual town halls and workshops, ensuring features like breakout rooms and live polling are available to encourage participation.
- **Ensure Mobile Compatibility:** Given that many residents may access digital content via smartphones, ensure all platforms and materials are mobile-friendly.

Facilitating Inclusive Virtual Meetings

- **Provide Multilingual Support:** Offer real-time interpretation services during virtual meetings to accommodate non-English speaking participants.
- Implement Accessibility Features: Ensure platforms support closed captioning and are compatible with screen readers to assist participants with disabilities.

- Engage Participants Actively: Incorporate interactive elements such as polls, Q&A sessions, and breakout discussions to maintain engagement and gather diverse perspectives.
- Offer Technical Assistance: Provide tutorials or helplines to assist participants unfamiliar with virtual platforms, ensuring equitable access to engagement opportunities.

Equitable Outreach Plan Template and Equitable Outreach Planning Checklist

Use the outreach plan template and planning checklist in the resources chapter when developing your outreach plan to ensure your outreach and engagement efforts are intentional, actionable, and equity focused.

Chapter 3 – Measuring Impact and Success

Measuring the success of community engagement efforts is essential—not only to evaluate what worked and what didn't, but to ensure accountability, promote continuous learning, and demonstrate your agency's commitment to equity. Tracking impact helps build trust with community members, partners, and stakeholders by showing that feedback is taken seriously and results are used to inform decisions. An intentional approach to evaluation allows agencies to refine their strategies over time and improve future outreach—especially for underserved and marginalized communities.

A. Establish What Success Looks Like

Before measuring outcomes, define what success means for your specific engagement effort. Consider:

- Did the engagement reach the intended audiences?
- Were barriers to participation meaningfully addressed?
- Did feedback collected influence decisions or lead to visible action?
- Did participants feel heard, respected, and valued?

Align your success criteria with your goals and objectives (see Chapter 1), and make sure they reflect both quantitative outcomes and qualitative experiences.

B. Use Both Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics

Quantitative Metrics:

These are numeric indicators that help track reach and scope.

- Number of attendees at meetings or events
- Number and demographics of survey respondents
- Website or social media engagement rates
- Volume of materials distributed in multiple languages
- Participation rates by neighborhood, language group, or age group

Qualitative Metrics:

These help assess quality, relevance, and trust.

- Participant feedback and satisfaction levels
- Themes or concerns raised in open-ended responses
- Observations from staff or community partners
- Testimonials or quotes from community members
- Degree to which community input shaped project decisions

C. Disaggregate and Analyze Data Through an Equity Lens

To evaluate whether your engagement was inclusive and equitable:

- Break down data by race/ethnicity, income, zip code, language, age, and disability status when possible.
- Compare turnout or participation levels to your community's demographic profile.
- Ask: Who did we hear from—and who did we miss?

This kind of analysis helps identify gaps, understand the impact on different groups, and inform improvements for future outreach.

D. Collect and Analyze Feedback

- Offer Multiple Feedback Tools: Use comment cards, follow-up surveys, QR codes linking to feedback forms, and brief "exit interviews" after events.
- **Ensure Anonymity and Safety**: Particularly for marginalized residents, provide anonymous options to encourage honest input without fear of retaliation.
- **Debrief Internally**: After each event or outreach effort, hold a reflection session with staff and partners to discuss what worked, what didn't, and what could improve.

E. Share Outcomes Transparently

Reporting back to the community closes the loop and shows that their input mattered. Best practices include:

- Sharing summary reports in plain language and in multiple languages
- Creating visual summaries (e.g., infographics, videos, maps)
- Posting updates on your website and social media
- Sending thank-you messages and outcome summaries to participants
- Clearly showing how community input influenced decisions or project design

Chapter 4 – Resources

Resources include:

- Equitable Outreach Plan Template
- Equitable Outreach Planning Checklist
- Post Outreach Survey
- Community Events List
- Holiday Calendar
- Meeting Facilities List
- Digital Engagement Tools, Guides and Best Practices
- Media List (RTC mailing lists)
- Stakeholder List (RTC mailing lists)

Project Outreach Plan (Template)

1) Project Overview	
Project Name:	
Project Description/Purpose:	
Project Timeline:	
Project Lead/Staff Contact(s):	
2) Target Audiences	
Primary audiences:	
Secondary audiences:	
Priority Groups (check all that apply):	
☐ Low-income communities	☐ Seniors/older adults
☐ Spanish-speaking communities	☐ Rural/geographically isolated residents
□ Other non-English speakers	☐ Other:
☐ People with disabilities	Neighborhoods/census tracts of focus:
□ Youth	
3) Outreach Goals & Objectives	
What are your equity-centered outreach goals?	
1)	
2)	
3)	
What measurable objectives will you track?	
1)	

4) Barriers to Participation		
Potential Barriers (check all that apply):		
☐ Language	☐ Disability access	
☐ Transportation	☐ Digital access	
□ Childcare	☐ Lack of trust / historical inequities	
☐ Meeting time / location	☐ Other:	
Strategies to reduce barriers:		
5) Outreach Strategy: What methods will you utilize	e to effectively reach your target audience?	
Traditional Media		
Digital Outreach		
In-Person Outreach		
Community Partnerships		
Other Strategies:		
6) Key Messages & Language Access		
Key messages:		
Languages to be offered:		
Interpreter(s) needed? Yes/No		
Written translation needed? Yes/No		

7) Accessibility & Accommodations (check those that are needed)

2)

3)

☐ ADA accessible venue	☐ Childcare	
☐ ASL interpreter	☐ Transportation assistance	
☐ Captioning (virtual)	☐ Refreshments	
☐ Large-print materials	☐ Virtual participation option	
8) Schedule & Outreach Touchpoints (List all meet	ings, events, etc. taking place)	
Method Date(s) Location / Channel Notes		
9) Partners (Are there any partners you are working v	with or could potentially work with?)	
Organizations / Leaders:		
10) Metrics for Success (Identify the metrics you wi	ill use)	
Quantitative Metrics:		
☐ Total participants engaged		
☐ Number of events held		
☐ Surveys collected		
☐ Languages offered		
☐ Participation by target audience(s)		
☐ Other:		
Qualitative Metrics:		
11) Plan for Reporting Back		
How will feedback be summarized and shared?		
Timeline to report back:		

Equitable Outreach Planning Checklist

Project Readiness	Cultural & Language Access
□ Project purpose is clearly defined	\square Materials translated
☐ Timeline is set	☐ Interpreters scheduled
☐ Staff roles established	□ Culturally relevant messaging
	prepared
Target Audience	
□ Primary affected audiences	Accessibility
identified	□ Venue ADA accessible
☐ Underserved / priority groups	\square ASL / captions planned
defined	☐ Transportation / childcare available
☐ Geographic focus identified	
	Communications
Goals & Objectives	□ Clear messages drafted
☐ Goals reflect equity + engagement	□ Plain language used
purpose	☐ Multilingual formats planned
Barriers & Solutions	Reporting Back
☐ Barriers to participation identified	□ Reporting method identified
☐ Mitigation strategies defined	\square Timeline to report back set
	☐ Thank-you + follow-up planned
Outreach Strategies	
☐ Methods align with audience needs	
☐ Mix of in-person + digital	
□ Community partners engaged	
\square Meeting people where they are	

Post Outreach Evaluation

Instructions: Please complete this survey to help us identify gaps in outreach/additional focus areas that will help us develop best practices in future outreach activities

Goal: Proactively engage the community in an ongoing conversation to address their transportation needs while providing courteous, factual, reliable, timely, and helpful information

What were your intended outcomes or engagement
goals?
Communication of the contract
Summarize your outreach
activities:
Quantitative Outcomes
Total participants engaged:
Number of events held:
Surveys collected:
Languages offered:
Participation by target audience(s):
Other:
Qualitative Outcomes
What feedback did participants
provide?
What common themes or concerns were
raised?
Did community input influence the outcome or direction of the
Did community input influence the outcome or direction of the project?
project?
Othor:
• Other:

Equity Analysis
Have we disaggregated our data by race, income, language, and location?
Are there groups we intended to reach but did not? Why?
Did we reduce barriers for participation, and were those efforts effective?
Community Feedback
Did we ask participants how they felt about the engagement process?
Do we have feedback that reflects both satisfaction and areas for improvement?
Sharing Results
Have we summarized and shared the outcomes in accessible, community-friendly formats?
Have we shown how community feedback influenced the final outcome?
Have we thanked participants and invited them to stay involved?

CHECKLIST

Prove 1-2 sentences describing how categories were addressed. What worked what didn't.

How Category Was Addressed

OHCCKII		logor y	110W Odtogo	ory was Addressed
st	1.Engaging	with		
	underrepre			
	groups (der			
	language ac			
	2. Media (s	ocial,		
	traditional, v			
	3. Commu			
	partnership			
	(stakeholde	rs)		
	1 A a a a a a i h	sili+s		
	4. Accessit	al disability		
	etc.)	at, aloabitity,		
	5. Commu	nity Feedback		
				1
	ation	Staff Presen	Action Items	Community Feedback
(Physical	l/Remote)			
How did t	this activity	promote equity?		

Category

Checkli

Was collaborative dialogue achieved?
Did any feedback stand out to you?
Were there any ways this event could be improved/what would you do differently in the future?

Equity-Focused Community Based Organizations

A partial list of Community Based Organizations working with equity priority communities that have partnered with RTC to share information about and engage with community members on transportation projects and programs include:

- Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council
- Bike Santa Cruz County
- Community Bridges
- County Health Services and Community Traffic Safety Coalition
- Diversity Center
- Dominican Hospital Foundation Wellness Center and Life on Wheels
- Ecology Action
- Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Commission (E&D TAC)
- Meals on Wheels Community Bridges
- Pajaro Valley Arts Council
- Regeneración
- Santa Cruz County Human Services Department Adult and Long-Term Care
- Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission
- Santa Cruz Metro Advisory Committee (MAC)
- Senior Council of Santa Cruz County
- Shared Adventures
- Volunteer Center
- Watsonville Vision Zero
- Watsonville Wetlands Watch

Groups RTC should meet with in the future include:

- Aging and Disabilities Services Providers Advocacy Group
- Cakes for Care for Seniors
- California Association for Adult Day Services Board of Directors
- Churches
- Schools youth organizations, principals, teachers
 - o PVHS Environmental Committee
- Elderday Adult Day Health Care
- Grey Bears
- Homeless Garden Project
- Housing Advisory Commission
- IHSS Advisory Commission
- Master Plan for Aging Steering Committee
- Mid-County Senior Center
- Mid-County Democratic Club Board of Directors
- Retired Public Employees Association Board of Directors

- San Lorenzo Valley Highlands Senior Center
- SEIU 2015 Caregiver Union
- Seniors Council
- Valley Women's Club
- Watsonville City's Senior Advisory Board
- Watsonville Senior Center

Community Events List

Event	Timing	Location		Contact
Business Fair - Santa Cruz	March	Santa Cruz		
Earth Day - Santa Cruz	April	Santa Cruz		
Earth Day - Watsonville	April	Watsonville	Downtown City Plaza, Watsonville	
Earth Day - Cabrillo College Aptos Campus	April	Aptos	Cabrillo College Aptos Campus	
Earth Day - Cabrillo College Watsonville Campus	April	Watsonville	Cabrillo College Watsonville Campus	
Business Fair - Pajaro	April	Watsonville		
Cinco de Mayo Watsonville	May	Watsonville		
Bike to Work Day - Spring	May	Santa Cruz		
Midtown Fridays	All summer	Santa Cruz	1111 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz	
Santa Cruz Juneteenth	June	Santa Cruz	London Nelson Community Center	
Food Truck Fridays Capitola	Multiple dates May - August	Capitola	Monterey Avenue Park, Capitola	Contact Capitola Community Services
Twilight Concert Series Capitola	Wednesdays June - August	Capitola	Esplanade Park Bandstand, Capitola	Contact kbarreto@ci.capitola.ca.us
Music in the Plaza Watsonville	Every 1st & 3rd Friday in summer starting June 20	Watsonville	Downtown City Plaza, Watsonville	Contact Watsonville Parks & Community Services
Capitola Makers Market	Multiple dates June - August	Capitola	Esplanade Park & Capitola Wharf	Apply at cityofcapitola.org
Spirit of Watsonville 4th of July Parade	4th of July	Watsonville	Main Street, Watsonville	Apply via City of Watsonville website
National Night Out Capitola	August	Capitola	Jade Street Park, Capitola	Contact Capitola Police Dept.
Watsonville Strawberry Festival	August	Watsonville	Downtown Watsonville	Contact festival organizers or apply via city website
Movies at the Beach Capitola	August	Capitola	Esplanade Park Bandstand, Capitola	Contact Capitola Recreation Dept.
National Night Out Watsonville	First Tuesday in August	Watsonville	Pinto Lake County Park	Maria Rodriguez Maria.Rodriguez- Castillo@santacruzcountyca.gov
Watsonville Back to School Barbeque and Resource Fair	August	Watsonville	Marinovich Park Community Center, 120 Second Street	
Comunidad en Movimiento - Semillas de Bienestar, Watsonville	August	Watsonville	Pinto Lake County Park	Kymberly Lacrosse kymberly@growing- greatness.com
Street Smarts Back to School	August	Santa Cruz		
Strawberry Festival Watsonville	August	Watsonville		
County Fair	September	Watsonville	County Fairgrounds	
Downtown Santa Cruz Greek Festival	September	Santa Cruz		
Capitola Art & Wine Festival	September	Capitola		
Capitola Beach Festival	September	Capitola		
Second Harvest Wellness Fair	September	Watsonville		

			Capitola Mall Parking	
Week Without Driving	September	Capitola	Lot	
Open Streets Santa Cruz	October	Santa Cruz		
Bike to Work Day - Fall	October	Santa Cruz		
Senior Resource Fair	October	Watsonville		
			Watsonville High	
WATs UP! Block Party	October	Watsonville	School	
			Capitola Mall Parking	
Touch a Truck	October	Capitola	Lot	
Downtown Santa Cruz Harvest				
Festival	October	Santa Cruz		
				Kymberly Lacrosse
Open Streets/Calles Libres			Downtown City Plaza,	kymberly@growing-
Watsonville	November	Watsonville	Watsonville	greatness.com

Ongoing				
Farmers Markets - SC, Live Oak, Cabrillo, Watsonville, Scotts Valley				
Downtown Santa Cruz Farmers' Market	Every Wednesday	Santa Cruz	700-798 Cedar St, Santa Cruz, CA	https://santacruzfarmersmarket. org/contact/
Live Oak Farmers Market	Every Sunday	Santa Cruz	15th St & East Cliff Dr, Santa Cruz, CA	https://santacruzfarmersmarket. org/contact/
Westside Santa Cruz Farmers Market	Every Saturday	Santa Cruz	Mission St. Extension & Western Drive, Santa Cruz, CA	https://santacruzfarmersmarket. org/contact/
Aptos Farmers Market at Cabrillo College	Every Saturday	Aptos	6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA	info@montereybayfarmers.com
Watsonville Flea Market	Sundays 9am- 4pm	Watsonville		Contact Patricia Rodriguez to reserve space 831-235-1855
Downtown Santa Cruz Makers Market	Third Sundays	Santa Cruz		
Pajaro Chamber Lunch in the Park				
Farmers Markets - SC, Live Oak, Cabrillo, Watsonville, Scotts Valley				
Downtown Santa Cruz Farmers' Market*	Every Wednesday	Santa Cruz	700-798 Cedar St, Santa Cruz, CA	https://santacruzfarmersmarket. org/contact/
Live Oak Farmers Market*	Every Sunday	Santa Cruz	15th St & East Cliff Dr, Santa Cruz, CA	https://santacruzfarmersmarket. org/contact/
Westside Santa Cruz Farmers Market*	Every Saturday	Santa Cruz	Mission St. Extension & Western Drive, Santa Cruz, CA	https://santacruzfarmersmarket. org/contact/
Aptos Farmers Market at Cabrillo College*	Every Saturday	Aptos	6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA	info@montereybayfarmers.com
Watsonville Flea Market	Sundays 9am- 4pm	Watsonville		Contact Patricia Rodriguez to reserve space 831-235-1855
Downtown Santa Cruz Makers Market	Third Sundays	Santa Cruz		
Pajaro Chamber Lunch in the Park				
Chamber Mixers				

^{*}Farmers Markets are first-come, first-served basis (no sales allowed)

Holiday Calendar

(2025, to be updated annually)

A	Green Triangle – Diversity Leaders' Birthdays
	Blue Circle – United States Holidays
	Red Bar – Religious / Cultural Holidays
*	Purple Star- International Holidays

January 2025

- 1/6 Feast of Epiphany (Christian)
- 1/6 Guru Gobind Singhi's Birthday (Sikh)
- 1/7 Orthodox Christmas Day
- 1/10 * World Hindi Day
- 1/12 Baptism of Jesus Christ (Christian)
- 1/13 Korean American Day
- 1/13 Lohri (Sikh)
- **1/14** Mahayana New Year (Buddhist)
- 1/14 Makar Sankranti (Hindu festival to Sun God, Surya)
- 1/14 Orthodox New Year
- 1/16 National Religious Freedom Day
- 1/18 Bodhi Day (Lunar)
- 1/19 * World Religion Day
- 1/20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 1/21 National Day of Racial Healing
- 1/26 Finternational Customs Day (UN)
- 1/27 * International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (UN)

- 1/29 Lunar New Year
- 1/30 Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution

February 2025

- 2/2 Candlemas (Christian)
- 2/4 Shrove Tuesday (Christian)
- 2/4 A Rosa Parks Day
- 2/10 Guru Har Rai Jayanti (Sikh)
- 2/12 Tu B'Shevat (Jewish)
- 2/12 Magha Puja (Buddhist)
- 2/12 TLantern Festival
- 2/15 Nirvana Day (Buddhist)
- 2/21 * International Mother Language Day (UN)
- 2/25 Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)
- 2/28 Intercalary Days (Baha'i)

March 2025

- 3/1 Ramadan starts (Islam)
- 3/1 St. David's Day (Christian)
- 3/3 Clean Monday (Christian)
- 3/4 Shrove Tuesday/ Mardi Gras (Christian)
- 3/5 Ash Wednesday (Christian)
- 3/8 * International Women's Day
- 3/13 Palm Sunday (Christian)
- **3/14** Holi (Hindu)
- 3/14 Purim (Jewish)
- 3/15 Hola Mohalla (Sikh)
- 3/17 St. Patrick's Day
- 3/19 St. Joseph Day (Christian)
- 3/21 🐺 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN)
- 3/21 International Day of Nowruz (Baha'i)
- 3/25 Thiernational Day of Remembrance of Slavery Victims and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (UN)
- 3/27 Lailat al-Qadr (Islam)

- 3/30 Gudi Padwa (Hindu)
- 3/31 A Cesar Chavez Day
- 3/31 Eid al-Fitr (Islam)
- 3/31 🔻 International Transgender Day of Visibility

April 2025

- 4/5 Ram Naumi (Hindu)
- **4/11** National Day of Silence (LGBTQ+)
- 4/12 Passover Eve (Jewish)
- **4/12** A Dolores Huerta Day
- 4/13 Palm Sunday (Christian)
- **4/13** Passover (Jewish)
- 4/13 Theravada New Year (Buddhist)
- 4/14 Vaisakhi (Sikh)
- 4/17 Maundy Thursday (Christian)
- 4/18 Good Friday (Christian)
- **4/18** World Heritage Day
- 4/19 Holy Saturday (Christian)
- 4/20 Easter (Christian)
- 4/20 Last day of Passover (Jewish)
- 4/20 Chinese Language Day (UN)
- 4/20 Festival of Ridvan (Baha'i)
- 4/21 Easter Monday
- 4/23 Yom HaShoah (Jewish)
- 4/23 St. George Day (Christian)
- 4/30 Eid al Fitr (Islam)
- **4/30** Akshaya Tritiya (Hindu)

May 2025

- 5/1 Yom Ha'atzmaut (Jewish)
- 5/5 Cinco de Mayo
- 5/5 National Day for Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- 5/5 Orthodox Easter
- 5/9 Native American Day

- 5/12 Vesak- Buddha Day (Buddhist)
- 5/16 Lag B'Omer (Jewish)
- 5/17 International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia
- 5/19 A Malcolm X Day
- 5/21 * World Day for Cultural Diversity (UN)
- 5/22 A Harvey Milk Day (LGBTQ/Civil Rights Activist)
- 5/23 Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i) Gugu
- 5/25 * African Liberation Day
- 5/28 Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)
- 5/29 Ascension Day (Christian)

June 2025

- 6/2 Shavuot (Jewish)
- 6/2 American Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (Native American)
- **6/4** The Hajj (Islam)
- 6/6 Eid al-Adha begins (Islam)
- 6/7 Eid al-Adha ends (Islam)
- 6/8 Pentecost (Christian)
- 6/8 Race Unity Day
- **6/8** Onational Puerto Rican Day Parade
- 6/9 Whit Monday (Christian)
- **6/12** Guru Hargobind Singh Jayanti (Sikh)
- 6/13 Shavuot (Jewish)
- 6/15 Trinity Sunday (Christian)
- 6/15 All Saints' Day (Christian)
- **6/19** Juneteenth (Federal)
- 6/19 Corpus Christi (Christian)
- **6/21** Juneteenth (CA)
- 6/27 Muharram (Islam)
- 6/27 A Helen Keller Day (Disability Rights Activist)
- 6/29 Ascension Day (Christian)
- 6/29 Christopher Street Liberation Day (Anniversary of Stonewall Riots/LGBT Civil Rights Movement)

July 2025

- 7/6 Ashura (Islam)
- 7/9 Martyrdom of the Bab (Baha'i)
- **7/10** Dharma Day (Buddhist)
- **7/10** Guru Purnima (Hindu)
- 7/14 Tinternational Non-Binary People's Day
- 7/18 A Nelson Mandela International Day (Civil Rights Leader)
- **7/24** Pioneer Day (Christian)
- **7/26** ADA Day
- 7/29 Nag Panchami (Hindu)

August 2025

- 8/1 Tisha B'Av (Jewish)
- 8/8 Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)
- 8/9 * International Day of the World's Indigenous People (UN)
- 8/15 Assumption of Mary (Christian)
- 8/16 Shree Krishna Janmashtami (Hindu)
- 8/17 A Marcus Garvey Day
- 8/20 Ullambana (Buddhist)
- 8/22 International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief (UN)
- 8/23 🔻 International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition (UN)
- 8/24 Guru Grinth Sahib Jayanti (Sikh)
- 8/26 Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu)
- 8/26 Women's Equality Day (Right to vote)
- 8/30 Paryushana (Jain)
- 8/31 Finternational Day for People of African Descent (UN)

September 2025

- 9/5 Prophet's Birthday (Islam)
- 9/14 Holy Cross Day (Christian)
- 9/18 🔻 International Equal Pay Day (UN)
- 9/20 F HeForShe (UN promoting gender equality)
- 9/22 Navratri begins (Hindu)

- 9/23 Rosh Hashana (Jewish)
- 9/23 Tinternational Day of Sign Languages (UN)
- **9/23** Bi Visibility Day
- 9/26 Native American Day

October 2025

- **10/1** Maha Navami (Hindu)
- 10/1 Yom Kippur begins (Jewish)
- **10/2** Dussehra (Hindu)
- 10/2 Yom Kippur ends (Jewish)
- 10/2 A Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday
- **10/4** Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (Christian)
- **10/5** Onam (Hindu)
- **10/7** First Day of Sukkot (Jewish)
- **10/11** National Coming Out Day (LGBTQIAA+)
- **10/13** Last Day of Sukkot
- **10/13** Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 10/14 Shemini Atzeret (Jewish)
- 10/15 Simchat Torah (Jewish)
- **10/15** White Cane Safety Day (Blind Awareness)
- 10/15 Tinternational Pronouns Day
- **10/16** Spirit Day (LGBTQIAA+ anti-bullying)
- **10/20** Deepavali (Hindu)
- **10/20** Gur-Gaddi Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh)
- 10/21 Bandi-Chhor Diwas (Sikh)
- **10/22** Birth of the Bab (Baha'i)
- 10/23 Birth of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)
- 10/26 Christ the King (Christian)

November 2025

- 11/2 All Saints' Day (Christian)
- 11/2 Day of the Dead (Mexico)

- 11/5 Guru Nanak Dev Jayanti (Sikh)
- **11/20** Transgender Day of Remembrance (LGBTQ+)
- 11/25 * International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UN)
- 11/25 Day of Covenant (Baha'i)
- **11/28** Native American Heritage Day
- 11/29 * International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (UN)
- 11/30 First Sunday of Advent (Christian)
- 11/30 St. Andrew Day (Christian)

December 2025

- **12/1** Geeta Jayanti (Hindu)
- 12/2 Finternational Day for the Abolition of Slavery (UN)
- 12/3 Finternational Day of Persons with Disabilities (UN)
- 12/6 St. Nicholas Day (Christian)
- **12/8** Feast of Immaculate Conception (Christian)
- 12/8 Bodhi Day (Buddhist)
- **12/12** Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Christian)
- 12/15 Chanukah/Hanukkah First Day (Jewish)
- 12/22 Last Day of Hanukkah (Jewish)
- 12/24 Christmas Eve (Christian)
- 12/25 Christmas
- 12/26 Kwanzaa- First Day of Seven Day Celebration
- **12/27** Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti (Sikh)
- **12/28** Day of Holy Innocents (Christian)
- **12/30** Asrah B'Tevet (Jewish)
- **12/31** Watch Night (Christian)

Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/gare/cdcr-cchcs-gare-diversity-and-inclusion-calendar/

Meeting Facilities List

County Area	Name	Туре	Address	Seating Capacity	Notes	Contact	Website
North	Live Oak Grange	Hall	1900 17th Ave, Santa Cruz, CA 95062	100		dfeldman26@yahoo.co m (831) 325-3233	https://sites.google.co m/site/liveoakgrange/H all-Rental
North	Live Oak Community Center	Hall	979 17th Avenue Santa Cruz, CA 95062	140 (2 rooms combined)	A/V Speaker	reservations@parks.sant acruzcountyca.gov (831) 454-7938	https://parks.santacruz countyca.gov/Home/Pe rmitsReservations/Mee tingRooms.aspx
North	London Nelson Community Center	Multiuse room	301 Center St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	120	Podium Large HDMI TV (\$10 fee) \$82/hr	(831) 420-6177 (831) 420-6183 (room supervisor, call once booked for setup)	https://www.cityofsant acruz.com/government/ city- departments/parks- recreation/facilities/lon don-nelson- community- center/room-rentals
North	Felton Community Hall	Hall, meeting room	6191 Highway 9, Felton, CA 95018	Meeting room: 30		reservations@feltonhall. org (831) 335-5621	https://www.feltonhall. org/
North	Pacific Elementary	Multiuse room, classroo ms	50 Ocean St, Davenport, CA 95017	Varies		hredding@pacificesd.org (831) 425-7002	https://www.pacificesd .org/facilities-use.html
North	Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium	Auditoriu m, meeting rooms	307 Church St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	Varies		jreiter@santacruzca.gov (831) 420-5242	https://www.cityofsant acruz.com/government/ city- departments/parks- recreation/civic- auditorium/reserving- the-civic
North	Harvey West Clubhouse & Scouthouse	Hall	326 Evergreen St, Santa Cruz, CA, 9 5060	Clubhouse : 90 Scouthous e: 62	Projector screen (clubhouse) Clubhouse is \$71/hr, Scouthouse is \$60/hr, \$150 refundable damage deposit	(831) 420-5270	https://www.cityofsant acruz.com/government/ city- departments/parks- recreation/reservations /indoor-facilities
North	Santa Cruz High School Auditorium	Auditoriu m	415 Walnut Avenue Santa Cruz, 95060	780	·	(831) 429-3904	https://sccs.civicpermit s.com/Account/Login
North	Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH)	Varies	705 Front St. Santa Cruz, CA 95060	Varies		(831) 429-1964	https://www.santacruz mah.org/rent

North	Santa Cruz Veterans Memorial Building	Varies	846 Front St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	Varies		booking@vetshall.org (831) 454-0478	https://www.veteransha ll.org/ https://www.veteransha ll.org/rental-rates/
North	Santa Cruz Police Department Community Room	Commun ity room	155 Center St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	85 seated 40 seated with tables	Projector and screen, microphone and stand Minimum rental 2 hours: \$135 6 hours: \$264 Additional hours: \$36	(831) 420-5812 confrmpc@santacruzca. gov	https://www.santacruz ca.gov/Government/Cit y- Departments/Police/Ho w-do-I/Community- Room
North	County Building Basement Conference Room	Conferen ce room	701 Ocean St # 520, Santa Cruz, CA 95060			(831) 454-2000	https://www.santacruz countyca.gov/Governm ent.aspx
North	Santa Cruz City Council Chambers	Council chamber s	809 Center St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	11 seats at the dais 140 seated	In-person only, no hybrid capability Monday- Friday 8:00 a.m12:00 p.m. and Monday- Thursday 1:00 p.m5:00 p.m.	(831) 420-5030	https://www.santacruz ca.gov/Home
Mid	Aptos Library	Meeting room	7695 Soquel Dr, Aptos, CA 95003	76	85-inch wall- mounted screen		https://www.santacruz pl.org/meeting-rooms/
Mid	Capitola Library	Meeting room	2005 Wharf Rd, Capitola, CA 95010	60	90-inch wall- mounted screen Microphone with ceiling speakers		https://www.santacruz pl.org/meeting-rooms/
Mid	Mid County Senior Center	Hall	829 Bay Avenue Capitola, CA 95010	Hall: 185 Annex: 80	Hall: large screen TV, PA system Annex: large screen TV, projector and screen	mcsc4u@att.net (831) 476-4711	https://www.mcsc- capitola.org/rentals/
Mid	Community Foundation Santa Cruz County	Varies	7807 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA 95003			facilities@cfscc.org (831) 662-2000	https://www.cfscc.org/ blog/community- foundation-room- reservations
South	Watsonville Civic Plaza Community Rooms	Hall	275 Main Street, Fourth Floor,	150 (2 rooms combined, can be split in half)	A/V	israel.tirado@watsonvill e.gov 831-768-3240	https://www.watsonvill e.gov/1143/Indoor- Facilities

South	Watsonville Library	Meeting rooms	Watsonvill e, CA 95076 250 Main Street Watsonvill e, CA 95076	Robert & Elayne Stein Meeting Room: 78	A/V with VGA connection (bring HDMI converter)	831-768-3406	https://www.watsonvill e.gov/608/Study- Meeting-Rooms
South	Mello Center	Auditoriu m	250 E Beach St, Watsonvill e, CA 95076			andrea_botsford@pvusd .net 831-234-3781	https://www.mellocent er.org/rental- information
South	Watsonville Senior Center	Hall	114 E. 5th Street, Watsonvill e, CA 95076	70		israel.tirado@watsonvill e.gov 831-768-3240	https://www.watsonvill e.gov/1143/Indoor- Facilities
South	Cabrillo Watsonville Center	Multiple	318 Union Street Watsonvill e, CA 95076	Auditorium : 70	Projector Audio \$150/hr plus staffing of \$75/hr, cleaning fee of \$120	chhankes@cabrillo.edu (831) 786-4701	https://extension.cabrill o.edu/facilitiesrentals/
South	Ramsay Park Family Center (closed until Spring 2026)	Hall	1301 Main Street, Watsonvill e, CA 95076			israel.tirado@watsonvill e.gov 831-768-3240	https://www.watsonvill e.gov/1143/Indoor- Facilities
South	Watsonville Veterans Hall (currently closed)	Hall	215 E Beach Street Watsonvill e, CA 95076	400		israel.tirado@watsonvill e.gov 831-768-3240	https://www.watsonvill e.gov/1143/Indoor- Facilities
South	Watsonville YMCA	Meeting room	27 Sudden St, Watsonvill e, CA 95076		Available Saturday or Sunday after 3 pm	831-728-9622	https://www.centralcoa stymca.org/watsonville- family-ymca/

Digital Engagement Tools, Guides and Best Practices

Community Engagement Tools

Poll Everywhere – An innovative online polling platform. *Free and Paid options available*.

<u>Community Remarks</u> – Survey map that makes it easy for citizens to access a map, plot a comment, and go. *Paid options available*.

<u>Crowdbrite</u> – Online platform for crowdsourcing and innovative stakeholder & public engagement. *Paid options available*.

Mind Mixer – An online engagement platform. Paid options available.

Interactive Text – Platform to engage people through texts. Paid options available.

Survey Monkey - Online survey platform. Paid options available.

<u>MetroQuest</u> – Online planning and engagement platform for online public engagement solution for urban transportation planning. *Paid options available*.

<u>Bang the Table: Engagement HQ</u> – Platform for local and city governments to drive online public participation. *Paid options available*.

<u>OpenGov</u> – Online platform to help allocate resources, increase efficiency, improve public engagement, and make data and information readily available to staff and elected officials. *Paid options available*.

<u>Thoughtexchange</u> – Online crowdsourcing platform to solicit ideas from participants, who then rank the ideas submitted by other meeting participants. *Paid options available*.

Miro – Online collaborative whiteboard. Free and Paid options available.

<u>Slido</u> – Tool to empower an audience to ask questions, vote in polls and be a part of the discussion. *Free and Paid options available. Paid options available.*

<u>Balancing Act</u> – An easy-to-use online budget simulation that engages stakeholders to help leaders make tough choices. *Paid options available*.

<u>Konveio</u> – A digital outreach platform that turns regular PDFs into Social Documents to better convey ideas, collect feedback and spark action. *Free and Paid options available*.

<u>Social Pinpoint</u> – A customizable community engagement platform to help organizations improve the way they interact and engage their community. *Paid options available*.

<u>76Engage</u> – A platform for effective digital engagement, providing engagement managers with publishing, management, moderation, analysis, and reporting. *Paid options available*.

<u>Participate.online</u> – An online engagement platform for anytime, anywhere participation. *Paid options available*.

<u>Civic Responsibility Guide: Resources to Promote Civic Engagement</u> – Published by Concord Law School.

Meeting Tools

<u>Mentimeter</u> – Platform to create interactive presentations and meetings. *Free and Paid options available.*

<u>MeetingSift</u> – Collaboration platform to run more productive meetings. *Free and Paid options available*.

<u>GoToMeeting/GoToWebinar</u> – A video chat client that is one of the most established and reliable in the industry. *Paid options available*.

<u>Webex</u> – Cisco's video conference solution, integrates directly with their Citrix cloud platform. *Free and Paid options available*.

Zoom – The newer and exceedingly popular video conferencing solution for online meetings and conferences. *Free and Paid options available*.

<u>Facebook Live</u> – Livestreaming platform for events, performances and gatherings on Facebook. *Free options available*.

YouTube – A platform to post videos and livestream events. Free options available.

Form Site – Online forms and surveys. Free and Paid options available.

Minutes.io – A platform for effortlessly taking meeting notes and minutes. Paid options available.

<u>Kahoot!</u> – A Fun multiple-choice customizable quiz game that users can play from their phones and computers. *Free and Paid options available*.

<u>Lucidcharts</u> – A web-based proprietary platform that is used to allow users to collaborate on drawing, revising and sharing charts and diagrams. *Free and Paid options available*.

Examples of Tools in Action

Mullen Area Master Plan, Missoula, Montana — Online virtual charrette.

<u>Unincorporated San Mateo County Active Transportation</u> – Project engagement page using participate online.

City of San Luis Obispo Open City Hall - Online forum using OpenGov's Open City Hall.

Best Practices and Guides

Best Practices for Virtual Engagement, Local Government Commission

Understanding Digital-First Community Engagement, Bang the Table

Virtual Toolkit, Divided Community Project

Broadening Public Participation Using Online Engagement Tools, Institute for Local Government

Equitable Public Participation, Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability

Participation Tools for Better Community Planning, Local Government Commission

<u>Town Planning Stuff Everyone Needs to Know: Ep 13: Staying Engaged, Online</u>, Dover Kohl & Associates – Town planner Victor Dover describes how and why to keep collaboration going, even during times of crisis and social distancing.

Virtual Public Engagement: A more Inclusive Approach to Charrettes, CNU

How to do Online Meetings and Town Halls Webinar, City of Oakland

How To do Online Meetings & Town Halls Toolkit, City of Oakland

How To Facilitate Effective Virtual Meetings, Beth's Blog

Online Facilitation Resources, 350 Global Trainings

<u>The Definitive Guide To Facilitating Remote Workshops</u>, MURAL – Insights, tools and case studies from digital-first companies and expert facilitators.

Virtual Meetings for Clarity and Momentum, CoCreative

<u>Facilitating Effective Virtual Meetings</u>; Sarah Rubin, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, California Department of Conservation

Online Collaboration Tools, Community at Work

Tips for Online Retreats and Meetings

Zoom tutorials for phone & computer; English & Español, UC Merced

Source: CivicWell

https://civicwell.org/civic-resources/virtualengagement/

Appendix B: Equity Discovery Report & Recommendations







Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Equity Discovery Report & Recommendations 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



An Organization of Phenomenal Potential

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) represents a remarkable example of public service excellence poised for transformational success. At its core lies an exceptional level of public service motivation that permeates all levels of staff, board, and committee membership. This deep commitment to serving the community, combined with demonstrated collaborative innovation, strategic leadership with board alignment, and a genuine growth mindset characterized by humility and continuous learning, creates a foundation of phenomenal potential for innovative solutions to complex public challenges.

The agency's expansion from transportation planning into engineering represents more than organizational growth; it demonstrates adaptability, vision, and the courage to evolve in response to community needs. This multi-generational, interdisciplinary workforce and board and community leadership has shown remarkable wisdom in seeking external expertise when needed, investing strategically in organizational development, and maintaining unwavering commitment to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion. These strengths position the organization not merely to navigate change, but to lead transformation in public service delivery.

Strategic Evolution and Community-Centered Excellence

The SCCRTC's growth in scope, scale, and professional capacity has created opportunities to strengthen community relationships and deepen equity practices, particularly with South County residents. Our comprehensive analysis, including document review, training observations, facilitated discussions, and engagement with staff, board members, and committee members, reveals significant opportunity to leverage the organization's technical excellence toward enhanced community impact.

Our multi-method approach has identified clear pathways for the SCCRTC to evolve from traditional public outreach compliance toward trauma-informed community engagement and equity-centered planning that ensures all county residents experience genuine representation in transportation decision-making.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Comprehensive Community Engagement Framework

The recommendations presented in this report reflect strategic opportunities to advance the SCCRTC's community service mission. Our extensive review of key documents, protocols, strategic plans, and public-facing materials, combined with training workshops and facilitated discussions, has identified opportunities for enhanced clarity and consistency in community engagement across all organizational functions.

We emphasize a critical principle: meaningful community impact requires not just policy excellence but consistent, thoughtful implementation through authentic relationships and culturally responsive practices. The recommendations focus on:

- **South County Engagement Strategy**: Comprehensive approach to deepen relationships with South County residents through culturally responsive practices, accessible engagement formats, and community partnership
- Historical Context Training: Building staff capacity to understand South County communities' experiences with development and transportation planning, enabling more effective outreach and partnership
- Trauma-Informed Community Engagement: Implementing best practices that honor community experiences and create safe, accessible participation pathways
- Unified Communication Strategy: Ensuring consistent, transparent communication that builds trust and demonstrates how community input influences transportation decisions
- **Equity Impact Integration**: Establishing frameworks to evaluate how transportation investments affect different communities and advance equitable outcomes

These recommendations position the SCCRTC to leverage its proven technical expertise and project delivery excellence toward deeper community partnerships and more equitable transportation planning that serves all Santa Cruz County residents.

The Path Forward: Deep Optimism and Commitment

The SCCRTC possesses everything necessary to become a regional model for community-centered transportation planning. The confluence of exceptional public service motivation, collaborative innovation capacity, strategic leadership, and demonstrated commitment to growth creates an environment ready for transformational community impact. With strategic investment in community engagement capacity and equity practices, this organization can extend its technical excellence into authentic community partnership that establishes the SCCRTC as a leader in equitable transportation planning throughout the region and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION & PROJECT BACKGROUND



This report focuses on the SCCRTC's community engagement strategy, equity commitments, and external impact opportunities. Our comprehensive organizational assessment included extensive analysis and recommendations regarding internal organizational culture, leadership development, and operational systems, which is all work that is essential to supporting the community-centered practices described here. Those internal recommendations, along with detailed implementation guidance for staff and leadership, are provided in another version of this assessment. This report emphasizes the strategic community engagement and equity framework that will guide the agency's evolution as a regional leader in transportation planning, as these are the areas where board and committee understanding, support, and policy guidance are most critical to success.

Background

In response to SCCRTC's 2024 Request for Proposals (RFP 2187), this project was initiated to conduct a thorough equity-focused organizational assessment of culture and operational practices and develop customized ADEI trainings and conflict resolution capacity building. The RFP emphasized the need to embed equity into all agency operations, including hiring, procurement, community engagement, and project prioritization. The Justice Collective, a women-of-color-owned Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), was selected for its expertise in racial and transportation equity, organizational transformation, and culturally responsive methodologies.

The project scope includes:

- A comprehensive assessment of policies, practices, and culture through an equity lens.
- Review and recommendations to remove barriers in hiring and procurement.
- Development and delivery of tailored ADEI trainings for staff, board, and committees.
- Conflict resolution and skill-building advising sessions.
- Equity recommendations to inform the SCCRTC's creation of an actionable plan with monitoring and evaluation components to ensure sustained progress.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



ORIENTATION TOWARDS RESEARCH



TJC Research Approach

TJC is inspired by the principles in Indigenous scholar Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's groundbreaking text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*². We highlight her concerns with approaching research as "the context in which research problems are conceptualized and designed, and with the implications of research for its participants and their communities. It is also concerned with the institution of research, its claims, its values and practices, and its relationships to power." Smith continues, "Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built into research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood." Smith is explicit that the sole purpose of *Decolonizing Methodologies* is the self-determination of Indigenous people.

While we are not attempting to make a direct connection to how this project fulfills the purpose of self-determination of Indigenous people at this time, we have shared concerns with the research approaches used by Western institutions, and we strive to continue to evolve our research design towards fulfilling the intended outcomes of Decolonizing Methodologies.

Many areas of government research have been and continue to be a tool of oppression and exploitation against Black, Indigenous, and People of the Global Majority (BIPOGM), aka BIPOC. We understand that "research is an important part of the colonization process because it is concerned with defining legitimate knowledge."¹

In our assessments, these decolonizing principles translate into concrete practices: We center the lived experiences of those most impacted by inequity within your organization rather than privileging top-down perspectives. We design processes that build your internal capacity to define problems, generate solutions, and measure success according to the values and knowledge already present in your communities, rather than imposing external frameworks of what "good" looks like. Our methods prioritize transparency about power dynamics in the assessment process itself, create space for dissent and multiple truths, and ensure findings are accessible and actionable for all stakeholders, not just leadership.

More importantly, we design our processes so you can replicate them. The goal is not dependence on external consultants but the development of your own organizational muscle for asking hard questions, listening across difference, and making decisions that honor the complexity of your people's experiences. When you understand the "why" behind our approach: that research and assessments are never neutral, that they can either reinforce or challenge existing power structures, you gain the ability to critically examine any framework you encounter and adapt it to serve your community's self-determined goals rather than simply reproduce dominant narratives about what equity should look like.

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY



Methodologies & Data Sources

The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach grounded in decolonizing and intersectional frameworks. Data collection included quantitative and qualitative surveys distributed via SurveyMonkey to staff, board, and committee members. Additionally, thirteen in-depth interviews with staff, board, and committee members were conducted between March and August 2025. The research also involved a document review of over 850 pages of policy in 24 documents, analyzing internal policies, staffing assessments, and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Finally, anecdotal observations and insights from the six trainings for Staff, Board, and Committees, and 3-part conflict training workshop series, facilitated staff discussions with, and group and eight individual advising sessions were also holistically incorporated to round out the data as significant sources of critical information. Where sample sizes allowed, data was disaggregated by race, gender, tenure, and income, with a focus on identifying disparities affecting marginalized groups.



Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The stakeholder engagement process was designed to be inclusive, culturally relevant, and accessible. Web-based surveys were distributed to staff (February 12–March 2, 2025), board members (February 19–March 14, 2025), and advisory committee members (February 19–March 14, 2025). Quantitative research and engagement was supplemented by interviews, focus groups, six Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training workshops, three customized conflict resolution trainings and eight group and individual customized conflict advising sessions to deepen qualitative understanding and build trust.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY



As a value of being transparent and ethical, TJC acknowledges potential constraints of our methods. Like all other research efforts, TJC's information gathering has its limitations.

While this assessment utilized a mixed-methods approach and engaged a broad range of stakeholders, several limitations should be noted. First, the survey response rates, while robust for a small agency, represent a snapshot in time and may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives present within SCCRTC staff, board, and committee members. Some demographic groups, particularly those from historically marginalized backgrounds, may be underrepresented in the responses, potentially leading to an incomplete picture of equity-related opportunities, challenges and strengths.

The qualitative interviews, though in-depth, were limited to 13 participants (eight staff, two board/commissioners, and three committee members) and thus cannot be considered fully representative of all stakeholder views. The interview sample may also reflect self-selection bias, as those with strong opinions or particular experiences may have been more likely to participate. Additionally, the timing of the interviews and surveys, coinciding with periods of organizational change and leadership transition, may have influenced responses, with some findings reflecting temporary sentiments or heightened sensitivities.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can be subject to recall bias, social desirability bias, or reluctance to disclose negative experiences, particularly regarding sensitive issues such as retaliation or discrimination. The disaggregation of survey data by race, gender, and tenure was limited in some cases by small subgroup sizes, which may have restricted the depth of analysis and the ability to draw statistically robust conclusions for all identity groups.

Finally, while the document review was comprehensive for the materials provided, there may be relevant policies, practices, or unwritten norms not captured in the available documentation. As with any organizational assessment, the findings should be viewed as a foundation for ongoing inquiry and action, rather than as a definitive or exhaustive account of all equity issues and opportunities within SCCRTC.

OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

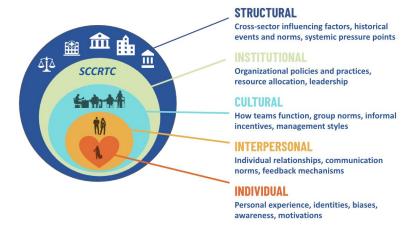


Table 1: TJC -SCCRTC Survey Responses by Survey Type

Survey Type	Number of Total Responses	Response Rate
Staff	20	87%
Board	8	62%
Committee	34	37%
Total	62	

How to Use This Report

As stated in the previous section, the data analyzed from this effort represents a snapshot in time. As such, it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of community needs and concerns. Instead, it is a tool for reflection and learning, as well as a launchpad into next steps. The findings are meant to support a high-level understanding of staff and volunteer community priorities,



both high-level and more specific. While the recommendations we offer represent reflections of the data collected, they are also intended to encourage thinking towards solutions that best fit the SCCRTC in ways that TJC may not have insight into as an external partner. Multiple dynamics, all with porous boundaries to each other, exert force on Santa Cruz County (see figure above). But the SCCRTC is not a passive actor, and dynamics shift in response to individual and collective behaviors. TJC has identified existing strengths and opportunities for the SCCRTC to prioritize towards greater access, equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels.

DATA ANALYSIS AND KEY INSIGHTS



COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: STRENGTHS



While the SCCRTC has navigated significant and critical leadership transitions alongside substantial growth in both the number and types of projects, including an important expansion of disciplines from a primarily planning focus to include engineering expertise, it has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. As a multicultural and multi-generational workplace and , the agency possesses several foundational assets that position it well for continued success and evolution.

Core Strengths and Assets

Exceptional Public Service Motivation

The most striking finding from our engagement process was the exceptionally high level of public service motivation demonstrated across the organization. Public service motivation, as defined by Perry and Wise (1990), refers to an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations. This was particularly evident among all staff who participated in interviews, focus groups, and especially those who took the initiative to engage in conflict resolution facilitated discussions and advising hours. Through the anecdotes and examples shared during conflict advising sessions around community engagement and working with the public, the team demonstrated an impressive level of care, thoughtfulness, and genuine commitment to learning what it will take to continue improving service to the public through enhanced communication, transparency, and creative community involvement strategies.

Deep Community Commitment

Perhaps the organization's greatest strength lies in the profound moral, intellectual, and emotional commitment of its staff, board, and committees to serving the community. While the definition of "serving the community" varies among stakeholders based on their unique identities, experiences, and perspectives, this shared dedication to community service creates a powerful unifying force that transcends individual differences and provides a strong foundation for collaborative work.

Capable Leadership with Organizational Trust

The current executive leadership is regarded as highly capable by many staff members and has earned both the buy-in and trust of the board. While some staff need greater alignment between leadership, staff, and governance, the evidence of trust in the Executive Director and desire by managers to grow and evolve can create an environment conducive to strategic decision-making and effective implementation of organizational initiatives if a growth mindset is more fully adopted among staff.

Commitment to Growth and Evolution

Several employees, board and committee members demonstrate a remarkable commitment to continuous evolution and change, coupled with a genuine desire to learn new skills, especially in community engagement, conflict, and operational practices. This growth mindset is particularly evident in areas critical to modern public service, including access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI), conflict resolution, communication, and community engagement. This learning orientation positions the organization to adapt effectively to changing community needs and best practices.

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: STRENGTHS



Exceptional Collaborative Innovation

Staff at all levels, along with some board and many committee members, demonstrate a notable level of collaboration that stands as a significant organizational asset. Through the examples and questions they raised during our engagement process, these stakeholders revealed how they are proactively getting creative and innovating together to address complex challenges. Their collaborative approach to "figuring it all out" reflects both resourcefulness and a collective commitment to problem-solving that transcends traditional hierarchical boundaries.

Innovation and Learning Culture

Among many staff members and managers, there is a demonstrated willingness to innovate and embrace new approaches to their work. This forward-thinking attitude, combined with the desire for continuous learning, creates an environment where creative solutions can flourish and where the organization can remain responsive to evolving challenges.

Strategic Investment in External Expertise

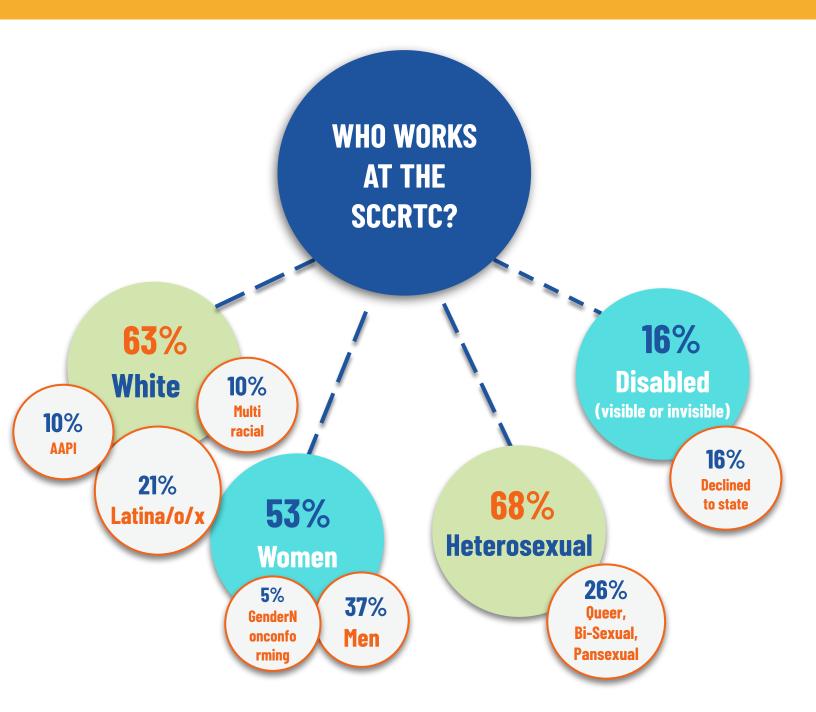
The agency has shown wisdom and self-awareness in recognizing where it needs additional support and has proactively sought outside assistance. The organization has invested both existing funds and pursued additional resources to engage external expertise in critical areas including organizational development, effectiveness, culture, general strategy, and ADEI initiatives. This demonstrates both humility and strategic thinking that will serve the organization well as it continues to grow and evolve.

Looking Forward

While the findings and recommendations outlined in this report present numerous opportunities for improvement and organizational change, we view these opportunities as pathways to leverage and build upon the existing strengths and assets detailed above. The organization's demonstrated commitment to community service, capable leadership, growth mindset, innovation capacity, and strategic approach to seeking support create a solid foundation for meaningful transformation. We have confidence that this agency can successfully implement recommended changes and continue its evolution to best serve the community it is dedicated to supporting.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS: Staff Survey





*The survey allowed respondents to select more than one categorical answer so that respondents could identify as multiracial and/or specify an aspect of their racial or ethnic identity. This type of survey design helps to illuminate the socially-constructed and contradictory nature of race, as the idea of racial purity is contested and allows participants to identify with all parts of their racial or ethnic identity.

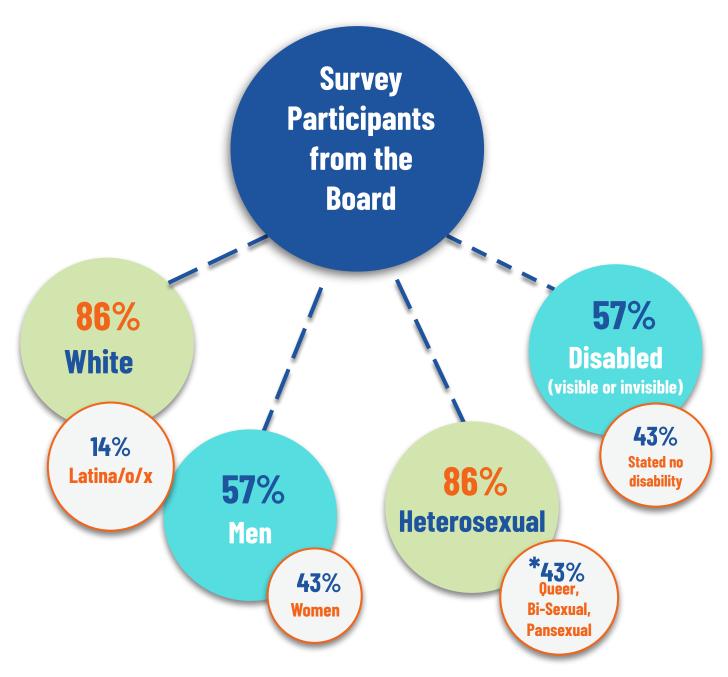
STAFF SURVEY



The staff survey, conducted from February 12 to March 2, 2025, engaged 20 respondents across various roles and tenures within SCCRTC. The survey combined quantitative Likert-scale questions with open-ended qualitative prompts to capture a holistic view of workplace climate, equity, and professional development. For purposes of this report, details on the staff survey and subsequent recommendations have been provided to the SCCRTC leadership and staff leading specific internal equity and organizational health and culture efforts.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS: Board Survey





*possible misunderstanding of question choices

The survey allowed respondents to select more than one categorical answer so that respondents could identify as multiracial and/or specify an aspect of their racial or ethnic identity. This type of survey design helps to illuminate the socially-constructed and contradictory nature of race, as the idea of racial purity is contested and allows participants to identify with all parts of their racial or ethnic identity.

BOARD SURVEY



The board survey, conducted from February 19 to March 14, 2025, included 8 respondents, primarily long-tenured members with significant influence on policy and funding decisions. Data from the Board Survey can be found in Appendix A.

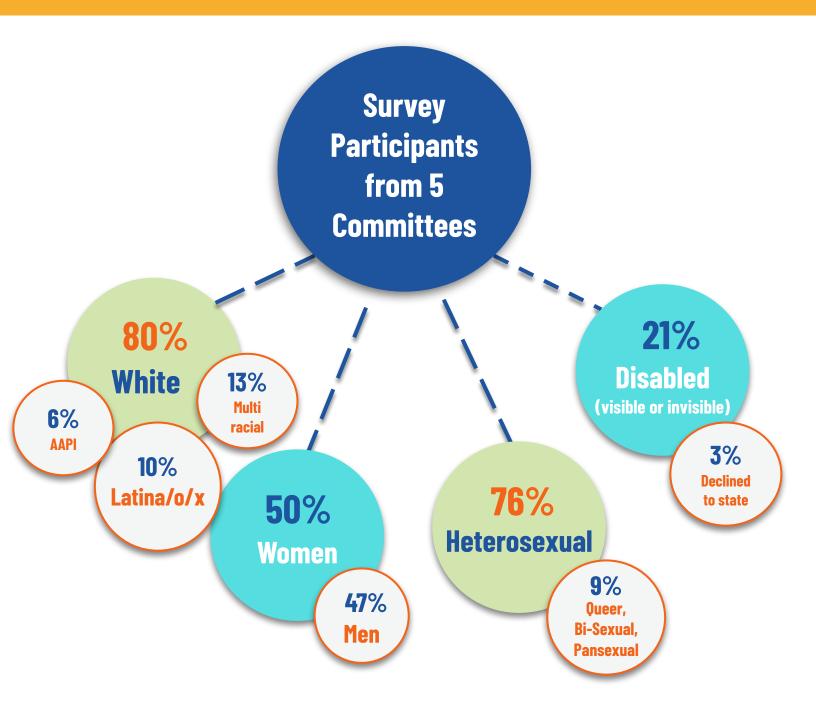
Eighty-eight percent of board members reported being very familiar with SCCRTC's mission. Fifty percent felt very confident representing diverse community needs, while the other 50% of respondents reported being somewhat confident. Funding constraints were identified as the most significant barrier to equitable transportation solutions by several respondents, while others cited gaps in community engagement, especially with lower income and Spanish-speaking populations.

When asked about ADEI integration and effectiveness, 88% of board members believed projects address equity to a moderate or great extent, but only 38% rated the board as very effective in integrating ADEI principles into decision-making. Training needs were also highlighted, with several respondents requesting community engagement skills and implicit bias training.

Qualitative responses from board members emphasized the challenges of funding and budget prioritization. Community engagement challenges were also noted, such as reaching working class communities.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS: Committee Survey





*The survey allowed respondents to select more than one categorical answer so that respondents could identify as multiracial and/or specify an aspect of their racial or ethnic identity. This type of survey design helps to illuminate the socially-constructed and contradictory nature of race, as the idea of racial purity is contested and allows participants to identify with all parts of their racial or ethnic identity.

COMMITTEE SURVEY



The committee survey, conducted February 19 to March 14, 2025, engaged 34 advisory committee members, predominantly from the Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Interagency Technical Advisory Committee. Data results from the Committee survey can be found in Appendix B.

Thirty-two percent of committee members reported an "excellent" level of understanding of ADEI concepts, with 59% reporting a "good" level of understanding. Forty-five percent indicated that equity is integrated into committee decisions to a great extent, while 12% reported integration to a small extent or not at all. Only 27% reported discussing diversity and equity issues at every meeting. Satisfaction with diversity was generally high, as 76% were very or somewhat satisfied with committee diversity; however, 21% were somewhat or very dissatisfied with diversity and representation within their committee.

Qualitative themes from committee members included concerns about geographic and demographic representation. Multiple members noted that more meetings located in South County are needed. Committees were described as lacking diversity, with limited representation from diverse communities. Language and communication barriers were also cited, such as a lack of Spanish-language materials that would make participation more accessible.

CROSSWALK OF FINDINGS: CORROBORATIONS & CONTRADICTIONS



A synthesis of key themes across staff, board, and committee surveys reveals both alignment and divergence in perspectives on ADEI priorities, barriers, and opportunities.

All groups identified gaps in reaching equity priority communities, citing language, transportation, and trust barriers. Geographic inequities, especially underinvestment in South County, were consistently noted. Staff emphasized internal capacity gaps, such as bilingual staffing, while the board focused more on external funding constraints.

All three cited funding constraints as a top barrier to equity. However, staff prioritized internal equity issues, while the board emphasized external project funding. All groups identified training gaps. The need for ADEI and implicit bias training was an emergent theme. The board expressed more optimism about cultural progress.

Committees and staff noted underrepresentation of marginalized groups, and both the board and committees acknowledged demographic mismatches with county diversity.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS



Through multiple sources of data spanning board members, staff, committee members, management, and executive leadership, a clear and present opportunity has emerged to focus on deeper engagement and representation from South County residents and community members, as well as allocation of greater funding to that community. Committee and board surveys consistently identified barriers to meaningful engagement with equity priority communities, including language, transportation, and trust. Only 27% of committee members said equity is discussed at every meeting, and multiple members called for more meetings in South County. Board members and committees both cited underrepresentation of marginalized groups and recognized the need for more accessible and culturally relevant outreach. This finding was consistently evidenced across data collection, including research interviews, training session questions, conflict resolution facilitated discussions, group advising sessions, and comprehensive review of key organizational documents including strategic plans and public-facing materials.

Recommended Goal: Creating a Strategic Focus on South County as a Priority

We recommend strategically focusing community engagement efforts on South County for a fundamental reason rooted in equity best practices: to achieve meaningful impact in an area identified as needing attention, especially when the opportunity is so clearly defined and ripe for action, organizations must be willing to overcorrect. We recognize that some stakeholders may perceive this targeted approach as an overemphasis on one geographic area. However, we stand by our decade of experience in the field to recommend that a comprehensive and strategically focused community engagement approach specifically targeting South County residents and community members will yield the greatest return on investment for this commission.

Root Causes Identified

The conflict resolution facilitated discussions and group advising sessions revealed that many of the conflicts staff experience stem directly from two critical gaps:

- 1. Lack of clarity regarding the agency's position and approach to community engagement and specific, tactical strategies for engaging with the public on details that may easily result in conflict
- 2. Limited experience and skill sets in community engagement and public outreach methodologies

These gaps create inconsistencies in public interactions and missed opportunities for meaningful community connection, particularly with underrepresented populations.

The strategy to achieve this goal should include the following Tactics:



Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy Framework

We recommend developing and implementing a comprehensive, agency-wide community engagement strategy that encompasses the following core components:

Foundational Elements:

- Values and Core Principles: Clearly articulated organizational values that center community voice and equity
- **Public Service Motivation Integration**: Explicit connection to the organization's demonstrated public service motivation as a driving force for authentic engagement

Methodological Approaches

Historical Context Training

Comprehensive training on the local history of what South County residents and community members have experienced regarding development changes, economic transitions, and socioeconomic and political shifts across the county, with particular focus on South County's unique trajectory. Engaging in this type of learning will enable and empower agency professionals, project managers, and staff at all levels to create more effective public outreach and engagement strategies, build stronger partnerships with local nonprofits, design the most effective policies, and construct the most critical capital assets with genuine community input and historical awareness.

Trauma-Informed Community Engagement

Training staff in trauma-informed approaches to community engagement, utilizing established curricula such as those developed by organizations with proven track records in this specialized area.

Culturally Responsive Practices

Strategies that acknowledge and adapt to the diverse cultural contexts within South County communities.

Communication and Consistency Framework:

- Unified Communication Strategy: A comprehensive approach that ensures consistency in the public's experience of the agency across all types of projects, regardless of depth, breadth, or scope
- Cross-Project Integration: Moving beyond project-by-project engagement to create a cohesive, recognizable approach that builds trust and familiarity with community members over time



Our specific recommendations in Appendix C for the Public Participation Plan, Measure D Implementation Plan, SCCRTC Budget, 5-Year Strategic Plan, Rules and Regulations, and other documents apply to this priority area as well. We recommend implementing those specific recommendations for various policies and practices, which will strengthen SCCRTC's overall community engagement strategy.

Implementation Structure

- **Agency-Wide Adoption**: Ensuring all staff, regardless of role or department, understand and can implement core engagement principles
- Measurable Outcomes: Establishing clear metrics for success that prioritize community feedback and engagement quality over quantity

This comprehensive strategy will address the identified gaps while leveraging the organization's existing strengths in public service motivation and collaborative innovation. By providing clarity, consistency, and enhanced skills, this approach positions the agency to build authentic relationships with South County communities and create more equitable outcomes in all areas of service delivery.

Success in achieving this Goal can be tracked through implementation of the following Metrics:

South County Engagement Excellence

ADEI Alignment and Lived Experience of Principles

- Increase the percentage of committee members reporting "excellent" understanding of ADEI to 55% by 2027.
- Monitor and improve satisfaction with committee diversity and representation, aiming for at least 85% satisfaction.
- Begin demographic tracking and public reporting on outreach participation in 2026.

Relationship Building

- Community Connections: Establish meaningful partnerships with 8-10 South County community-based organizations and informal community leaders
- **Engagement Participation:** Achieve 40% South County resident participation in relevant transportation planning discussions (measured against population representation)
- Language Accessibility: Provide interpretation/translation services in Spanish and other identified community languages for 100% of South County-focused meetings



Cultural Responsiveness

- Meeting Accessibility: Host 60% of South County engagement activities in community-identified locations (schools, community centers, faith organizations)
- **Flexible Participation:** Offer multiple engagement formats (evening meetings, weekend sessions, one-on-one conversations) achieving 50% non-traditional format participation
- **Community Leadership:** Partner with community members to co-facilitate 40% of South County engagement sessions

Historical Context and Trauma-Informed Practice

Staff Competency Development

- Historical Knowledge: 100% of public-facing staff complete local history training focused on South County development impacts and community experiences
- *Trauma-Informed Skills*: 85% of staff demonstrate competency in trauma-informed engagement practices through practical assessment
- Cultural Humility: Staff demonstrate measurable improvement in cultural responsiveness as evaluated by community feedback

Community Trust Building

- Trust Indicators: Achieve 65% community satisfaction with agency responsiveness and cultural competency in South County-focused surveys
- Repair and Accountability: Complete community listening sessions acknowledging past engagement gaps and committing to specific improvements
- Partnership Quality: Establish evaluation process with community partners showing 70% satisfaction with partnership approach and outcomes

Communication Strategy Excellence

Transparency and Accessibility

- Plain Language: Achieve readability scores at 8th-grade level for 100% of community-facing materials
- *Multi-Channel Communication*: Develop communication presence in community-identified platforms reaching 75% of priority demographics
- **Decision Transparency:** Implement public dashboard showing how community input influences actual project decisions with quarterly updates



Authentic Engagement

- **Meaningful Participation:** Document specific examples where community input resulted in project modifications or priority changes
- **Sustained Relationships:** Maintain ongoing communication with community partners between formal planning processes
- **Community Voice:** Establish community advisory structure with decision-making authority over engagement protocols and community benefit requirements

Success Measurement Framework

Community Pulse Surveys

- Trust in agency responsiveness and cultural competency
- Satisfaction with engagement accessibility and meaningfulness
- Sense of authentic influence over transportation decisions
- Cultural responsiveness and respect demonstrated by staff

Annual Comprehensive Community Engagement Evaluations

- Independent assessment of equity practices implementation to measure effectiveness of these recommendations and related interventions
- Community-led evaluation of engagement quality and impact
- Staff satisfaction with clarity, support, and growth opportunities
- Quantitative analysis of South County representation in decision-making processes

Long Term Impact Indicators (next three years)

- Measurable reduction in transportation equity gaps affecting South County communities
- Recognition as model agency for community-centered transportation planning
- Staff retention and satisfaction among those engaged in community-facing roles
- Sustainable community partnerships extending beyond formal project timelines

Additional recommendations specific to Measure D are included in Appendix D: Asset Review & recommendations.



Recommended Goal: Creating a Strategic Focus on South County as a Priority with Funding

As a tactic toward the goal of making an explicit equity focus on South County in SCCRTC's organizational strategy, finance and resource allocation to this community would address multiple stakeholders' clear feedback and desire to address specific needs in the region. Funding constraints and inequitable distribution of resources, especially for South County and other equity priority communities, were highlighted by all stakeholder groups. Only 45% of committee members felt equity was integrated into committee decisions to a great extent, and both staff and board cited funding as a top barrier to equity. The SCCRTC will deepen its broader equity strategy more meaningfully if it can ensure that discretionary funds and project prioritization processes are transparent and explicitly advance equity for historically underserved communities.

Suggested Success Metrics:

- Track and increase the proportion of discretionary funds allocated to South County and equity priority communities, aiming for progress toward the agency's 40% policy target.
- Publicly report on funding allocations and project outcomes by geography and demographic impact.
- Increase the percentage of committee and board members who perceive equity as "fully integrated" into funding decisions.

Suggested Timeline:

- Begin public reporting on funding allocation by geography and equity status in November 2025.
- Review and update funding criteria and project scoring to reflect equity goals by Spring 2026.
- Evaluate and adjust allocation strategies annually.

Priority Area: Strengthening Governance Collaboration and ADEI Capacity Across Board, Advisory Committees, and Staff



The SCCRTC functions through a collaborative governance structure comprised of its board of commissioners, advisory committees, and agency staff. Together, these three bodies are responsible for guiding policy, making funding decisions, and engaging the public around transportation planning. While significant progress has been made in embedding ADEI principles, especially through partnerships with consulting organizations and recent staff-focused initiatives, survey data from early 2025 suggests there is more to be done at the governance level. The data reflects a clear need for increased alignment, professional development, and inclusive infrastructure across all governing bodies, ensuring SCCRTC's policies and practices equitably serve all county residents.

Recommended Goal

To enhance the capacity of the SCCRTC Board, advisory committees, and staff to embed ADEI principles into governance processes through improved collaboration, targeted professional development, equitable participation practices, and ongoing structural support.

The strategy to achieve this goal should include the following Tactics:

1. Launch an Annual ADEI Training Series for Board and Advisory Committees

- Provide tailored workshops on implicit bias, inclusive community engagement, equitable decision-making, and ADEI-aligned budgeting.
- Ensure all trainings are accessible, bilingual (English/Spanish), and evidence-based.

2. Develop a Joint Governance Learning Cohort

- Establish a working group of 3–4 Board members, 3–4 advisory committee members, and SCCRTC staff.
- Meet quarterly to share learnings, align efforts, and coordinate on countywide ADEI strategies.
- Members will serve as ADEI ambassadors within their respective groups.

3. Increase Geographic and Economic Accessibility for Advisory Participation

- Hold at least 25% of advisory committee meetings in South County or underserved areas.
- Provide or expand transportation stipends and virtual access options.
- Ensure all meeting materials are translated and interpretation services are available.

4. Evaluate and Enhance Advisory Stipend Structures

- Review current compensation structures with an equity lens.
- Consider increasing stipends to support participation by low-income, working-class, or underrepresented community members.
- Include considerations for travel, caregiving, and disability-related accommodations.

Priority Area: Strengthening Governance Collaboration and ADEI Capacity Across Board, Advisory Committees, and Staff



5. Implement an ADEI Review Framework for Governance Decisions

- Create a standard checklist or set of guiding questions to be used in policy, funding, and planning decisions.
- Questions may include: Who benefits? Who might be harmed or left out? What barriers to access exist?

6. Establish Regular Communication and Collaboration Channels

- Hold quarterly briefings or cross-body updates between the Board, advisory groups, and staff.
- Share ADEI-related insights, feedback, and priorities to ensure unified progress and eliminate silos.

Success in achieving this Goal can be tracked through implementation of the following Metrics:

Training Participation

- o Board and advisory committee members complete annual ADEI training (target: 85%).
- Pre- and post-training surveys assess growth in ADEI understanding and confidence.

• Governance Cohort

Cohort established and meeting quarterly.
 Documented meeting agendas, outcomes, and shared tools or recommendations.

Geographic and Language Access

- At least 25% of advisory committee meetings held in South County or underserved areas.
- 100% of meetings provide Spanish-language materials and live interpretation.

Stipend Equity

- Completion of stipend equity review by December 31, 2025.
- Implementation of revised stipend structures to reduce participation barriers.

ADEI Decision Review Tool

- Number of major projects or decisions reviewed using an ADEI checklist.
- Feedback collected on tool effectiveness from board and committee members.

Cross-Body Collaboration

- Quarterly communication and alignment updates between Board, advisory committees, and staff.
- Qualitative feedback on collaboration and shared ADEI priorities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on the comprehensive analysis of survey data and in-depth interview findings, several specific key policy recommendations emerge for SCCRTC to advance its ADEI goals. Many of these recommendations are included in our explicit document review and analysis of the 24 documents requested for our review in Appendces for staff and external stakeholders. Below are the policy recommendations that apply to the SCCRTC's external work in the community.

Prioritization of Multi-Language Reports

For external community engagement, the agency should create a publicly available multi-language report that tracks the progress towards the goal of allocating at least 40% of discretionary funds to projects in South County and other equity priority communities, and hire a bilingual Outreach Coordinator to lead proactive, consistent engagement in historically underserved areas.

Strategic Partnership with Nonprofits and Community-Based Organizations

SCCRTC should partner with community-based organizations and small businesses to reduce barriers to participation in public meetings, by providing childcare, food, or transportation as needed.

Accessible Language: Using Laymen's Terms Whenever Possible

All outreach and public communications should be in jargon-free language and available in both English and Spanish, and the agency should systematically track and publicly report the demographics of outreach participants to identify and address gaps in representation.

Publish annual diversity and equity progress reports and establish ongoing monitoring and evaluation programs to assess progress on ADEI goals and make data-driven adjustments, ensuring that equity is embedded into agency policies and practices and that progress is transparent and measurable.

CONCLUSION



The SCCRTC stands at a pivotal moment in its evolution as a regional transportation leader. The convergence of exceptional public service motivation, demonstrated collaborative innovation, strategic board alignment, and genuine commitment to continuous learning creates a powerful foundation for advancing community-centered transportation planning excellence.

The SCCRTC's proactive investment in deepening community relationships, particularly with South County residents, and strengthening equity practices positions the organization to transform technical transportation expertise into authentic community impact. The collaborative spirit and problem-solving creativity that have driven successful project delivery can now be channeled into innovative community engagement approaches that ensure all county residents experience genuine representation in transportation decision-making.

This evolution from traditional public outreach compliance toward a more trauma-informed community engagement approach and equity-centered planning represents the SCCRTC's readiness to lead regional innovation in transportation planning. By centering community voice, investing in culturally responsive practices, and implementing comprehensive equity frameworks, the SCCRTC can leverage its proven technical excellence to create transportation solutions that truly serve all communities.

With the same systematic approach and dedication that has secured in competitive grants and delivered complex infrastructure projects, this organization can build community partnerships and equity practices that establish the SCCRTC as a model for transportation planning excellence. The potential for regional leadership in community-centered transportation planning is extraordinary and entirely within the SCCRTC's reach.



APPENDICES

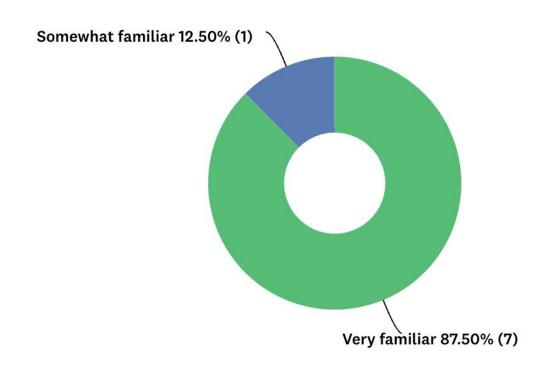
APPENDIX A:

Board Survey Results



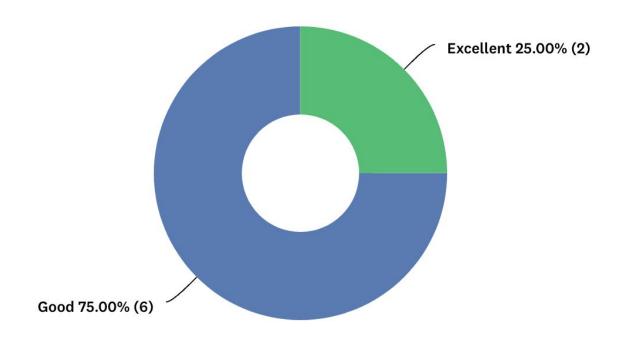


How familiar are you with SCCRTC's mission to develop and deliver transportation solutions for a vibrant, sustainable, and equitable community?



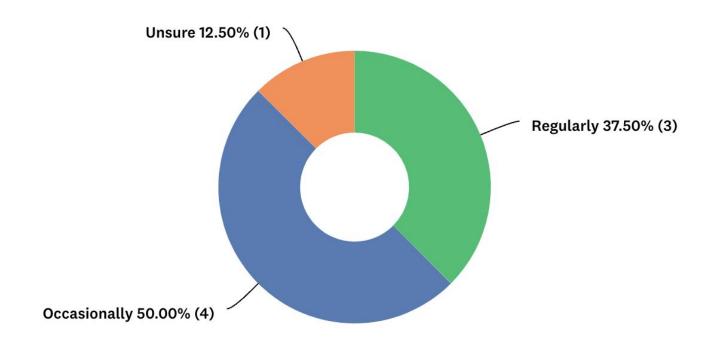


How would you rate your understanding of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) concepts as they relate to transportation planning and decision-making?



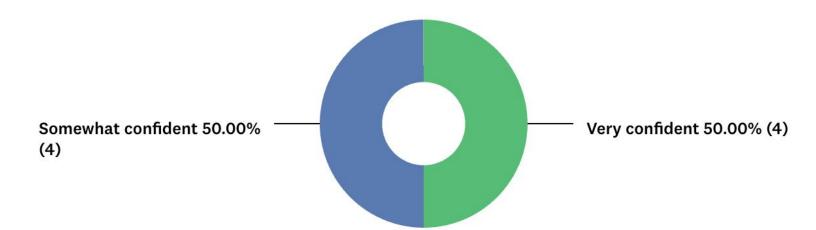


How often does the Board engage with underrepresented communities in Santa Cruz County regarding transportation issues?



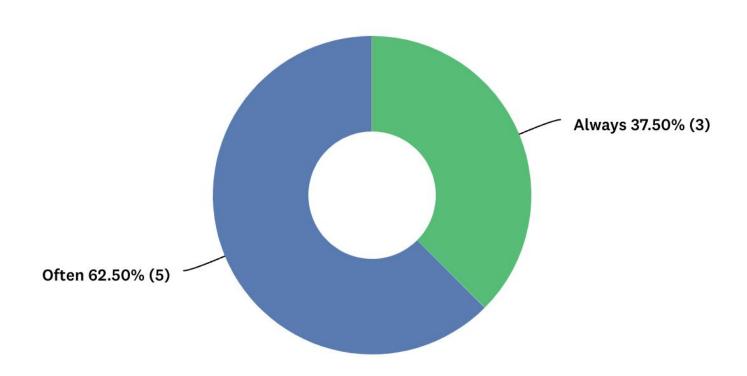


In your role as a Board member, how confident are you in your ability to represent the diverse needs of your constituencies in transportation discussions?



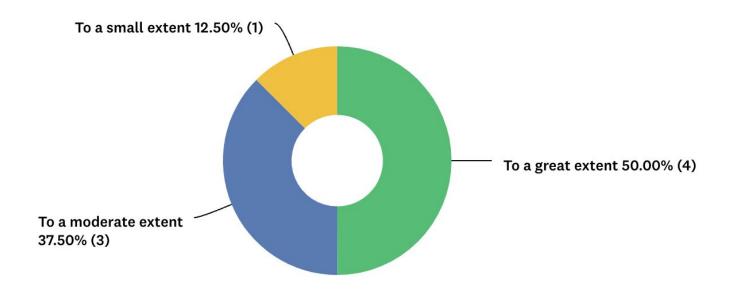


In your role as a Board member, how often do you consider ADEI when making decisions about transportation projects and policies?



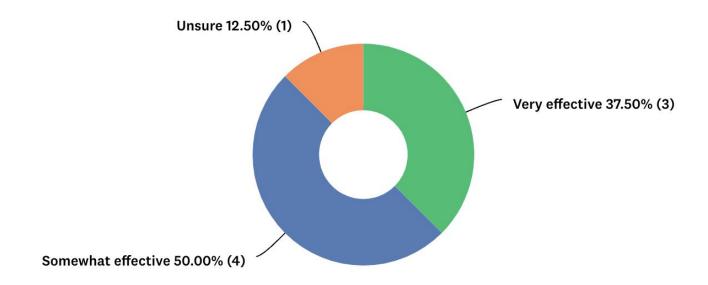


To what extent do you believe the current transportation projects and initiatives of SCCRTC address the needs of all community members equitably and do not benefit or negatively impact some communities more than others?





How would you rate the Board's effectiveness in ensuring that SCCRTC's decision-making processes consider ADEI?



(N)

ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: In your opinion, what is the most significant barrier to achieving equitable transportation solutions in Santa Cruz County?

1. Funding Constraints:

- Insufficient Funding: The majority of respondents highlight funding as a major barrier, noting that it hinders the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.
- Budget Prioritization: There is a concern about how budgets are prioritized, suggesting that actual needs may not be adequately addressed.

2. Infrastructure Challenges:

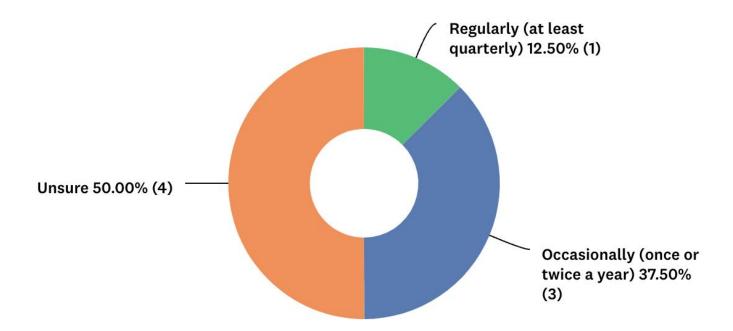
- Congested Infrastructure: Congested roads, such as Highway 1, are identified as significant barriers, particularly affecting immigrant communities in Watsonville.
- Rail Development: There is a mention of obstacles to rail development, with some influential individuals potentially blocking progress.

3. Community and Stakeholder Dynamics:

- Inconsistent Demands: Respondents note inconsistent definitions and demands from various stakeholders, which can complicate the development of equitable solutions.
- Public Will: One respondent mentions the "will of the people" as a factor, suggesting that public support or opposition can influence the feasibility of transportation projects.

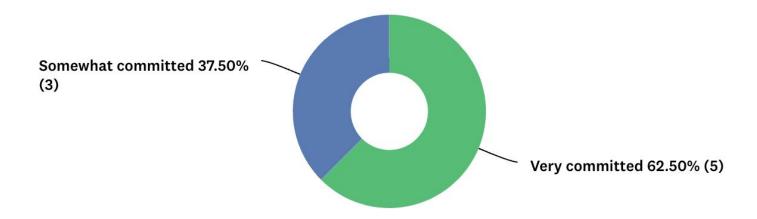


How often does the Board review and assess the ADEI impacts of SCCRTC's projects and initiatives?





How committed are you to advancing ADEI internally within SCCRTC via staffing and budgetary decisions, and externally in its transportation, projects, policies, procedures?



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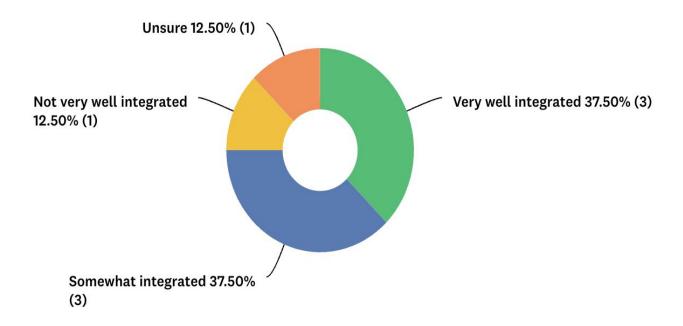
ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: What specific ADEI-related training topics do you believe would be most beneficial for the Board to receive? These may include but are not limited to, implicit bias training, leading across lines of difference, community engagement skills and strategies, historical context of inequities, etc.

- 1. Community Engagement:
 - Community Engagement Skills and Strategies: This is the most frequently mentioned topic, highlighting the importance of effective engagement with diverse communities to ensure inclusive decision-making.
- 2. Implicit Bias and Leadership:
 - Implicit Bias Training: Respondents suggest that implicit bias training would be beneficial to help Board members recognize and address unconscious biases.
 - Leading Across Lines of Difference: There is also interest in training on leading across diverse backgrounds to enhance the Board's ability to manage and support diverse perspectives.
- 3. Inclusive Planning:
 - Inclusion of Seniors: One respondent emphasizes the need to include the needs of seniors in planning processes, ensuring that all age groups are considered.
- 4. Communication and Consensus Building:
 - Communication Skills and Strategies: There is a desire for training on communication skills to facilitate consensus-building among Board members and the broader community.
- 5. Skepticism About Training:
 - No Additional Training Needed: One respondent believes that the Board does not require additional training, suggesting confidence in current capabilities.

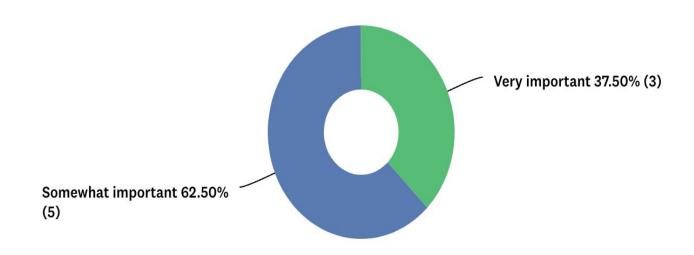


How well do you think the needs of and impacts to people with disabilities, people of color, low income individuals and neighborhoods, youth, seniors, and other groups are currently integrated into SCCRTC's transportation planning and decision-making processes?





In your opinion, how important is it for the board to reflect the demographics of Santa Cruz County?



(N)

ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: What do you perceive as the main barriers to implementing ADEI initiatives within SCCRTC and its projects and programs?

1. Funding Constraints:

- Inadequate Funding: The majority of respondents highlight funding as a significant barrier to implementing ADEI initiatives.
- Budget Prioritization: There is a concern about the willingness to allocate budget towards practical solutions for equity initiatives.

2. Capacity and Resources:

- Limited Capacity: Respondents mention capacity issues, which can hinder the effective implementation of ADEI initiatives.
- Lack of Diverse Talent: There is a perceived lack of educated people of color available for technical employment, which can impact the diversity of perspectives and expertise.

3. Inclusivity and Accessibility:

- Inaccessible Meeting Times: Meetings are sometimes scheduled at times that are inconvenient for working-class individuals, limiting their participation.
- Inconsistent Definitions and Demands: There is confusion about what ADEI initiatives entail and how they should be implemented, leading to inconsistent demands and expectations.

4. Uncertainty:

• Unsure: One respondent expressed uncertainty about the main barriers, indicating a need for further exploration or discussion.

(N)

ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: How do you see your role as a Board member in engaging with diverse communities and ensuring their voices are heard in transportation planning, project development, and services?

- 1. Advocacy and Representation:
 - Speaking Up for ADEI Values: Respondents emphasize the importance of regularly advocating for ADEI values and being open to communication with diverse community groups.
 - Representing Diverse Voices: Board members see themselves as vessels for bringing diverse opinions and voices to the table, particularly from specific geographic areas like South County.
- 2. Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:
 - Soliciting Feedback: There is a focus on soliciting feedback from diverse communities and disseminating information to keep them informed.
 - Participating in Public Meetings: Respondents highlight the importance of participating in public meetings and listening carefully to community concerns.
- 3. Supporting Inclusive Practices:
 - Supporting Staff Outreach: Board members support staff efforts to engage with diverse communities, taking their concerns seriously, and implementing responsive programs.
 - Inclusive Decision-Making: There is an emphasis on ensuring that all voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

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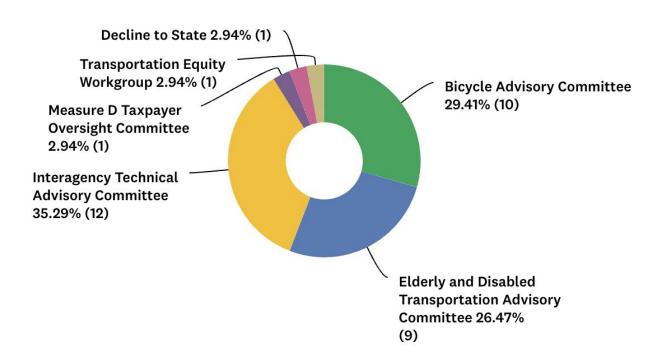
APPENDIX B:

Committee Survey Results



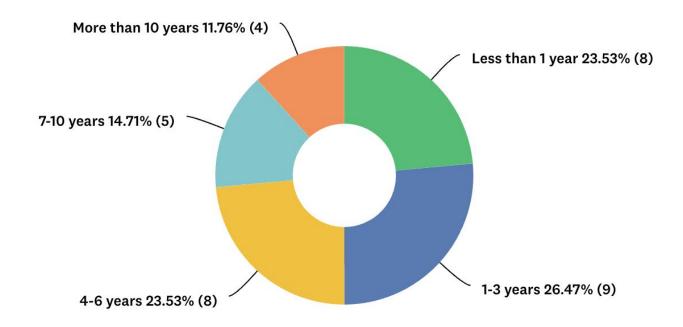


Which SCCRTC committee, subcommittee, or working group do you represent?



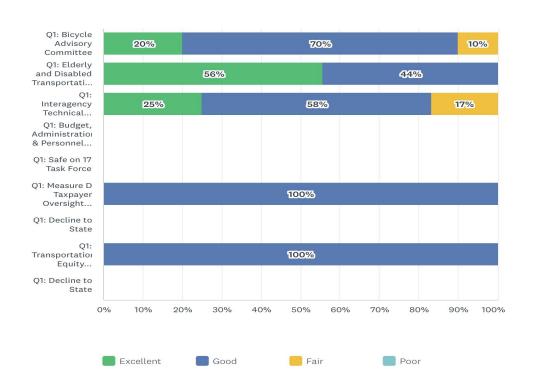


How long have you been involved with this SCCRTC committee or working group?





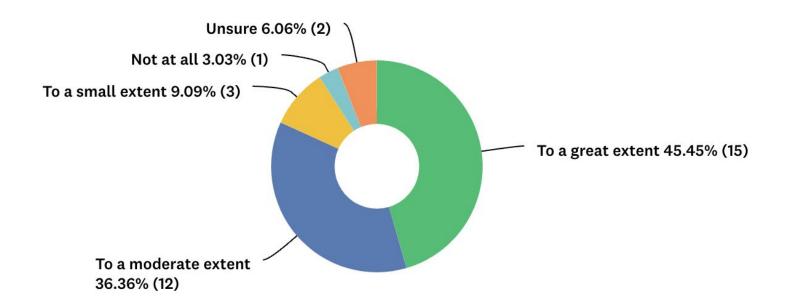
How would you rate your understanding of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) concepts as they relate to transportation planning?



Disaggregated by Committee

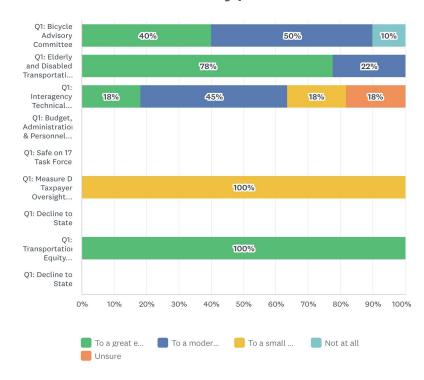


To what extent do you believe ADEI considerations are integrated into your committee's decision-making processes?





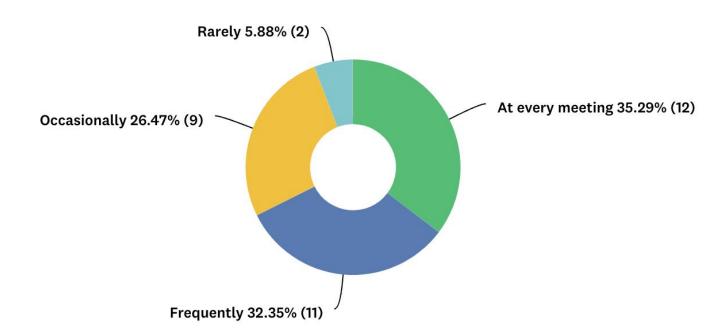
To what extent do you believe ADEI considerations are integrated into your committee's decision-making processes?



Disaggregated by Committee

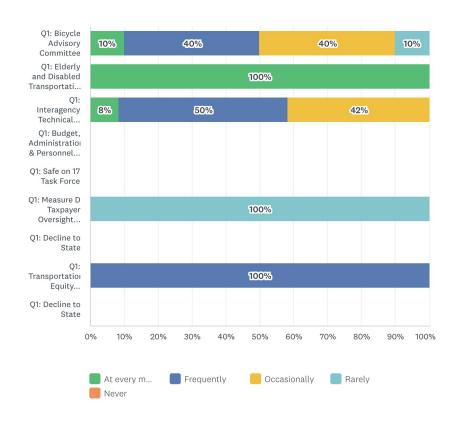


How often does your committee discuss accessibility in relation to transportation planning and projects?





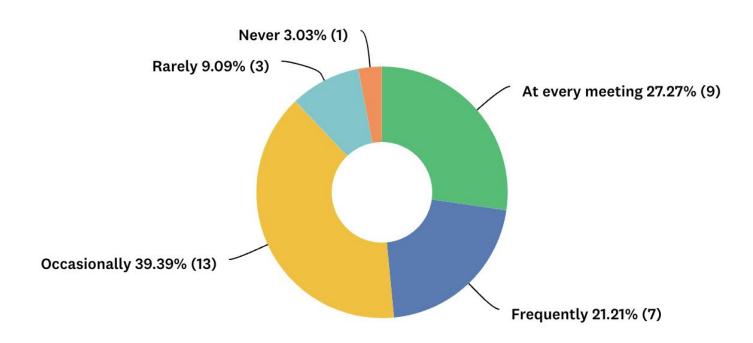
How often does your committee discuss accessibility in relation to transportation planning and projects?



Disaggregated by Committee

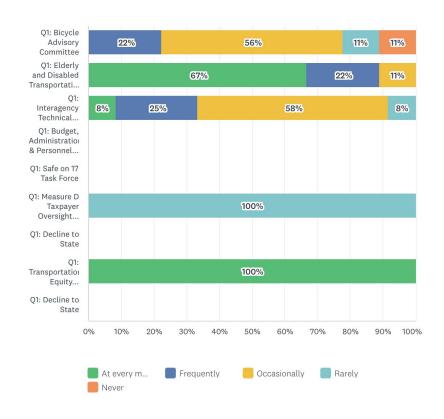


How often does your committee discuss accessibility in relation to transportation planning and projects?





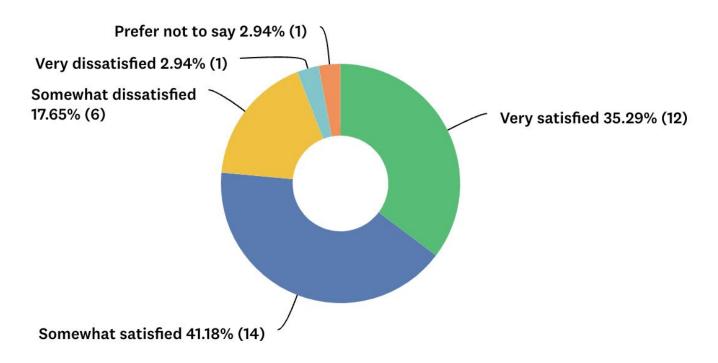
How often does your committee discuss accessibility in relation to transportation planning and projects?



Disaggregated by Committee

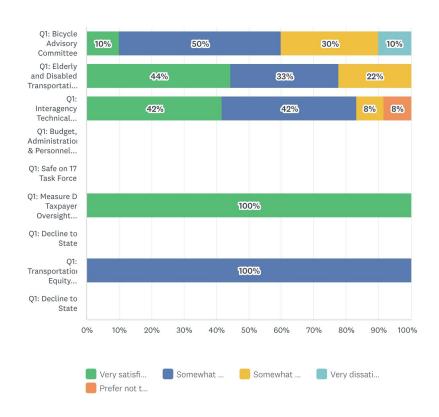


How satisfied are you with the diversity and representation within your committee?





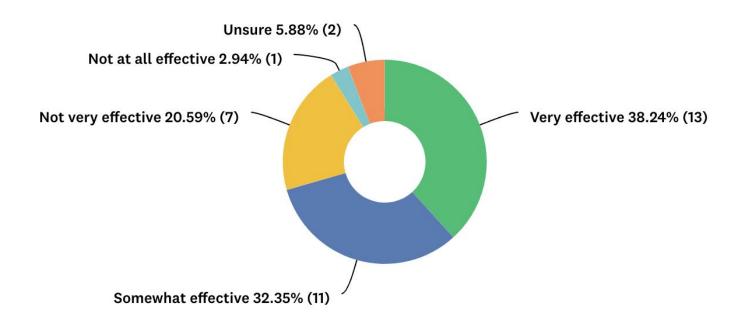
How often does your committee discuss accessibility in relation to transportation planning and projects?



Disaggregated by Committee

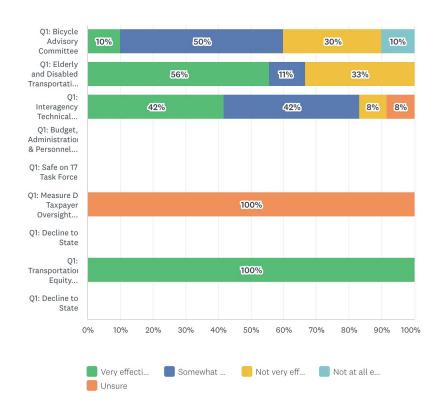


In your opinion, how effective is the SCCRTC in engaging with diverse communities in Santa Cruz County regarding transportation issues?





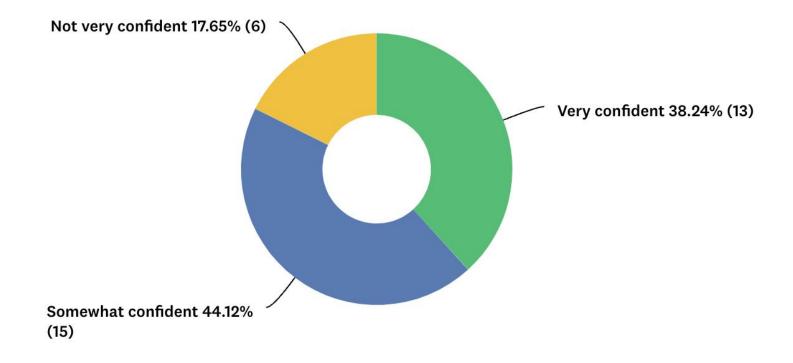
In your opinion, how effective is the SCCRTC in engaging with diverse communities in Santa Cruz County regarding transportation issues?



Disaggregated by Committee

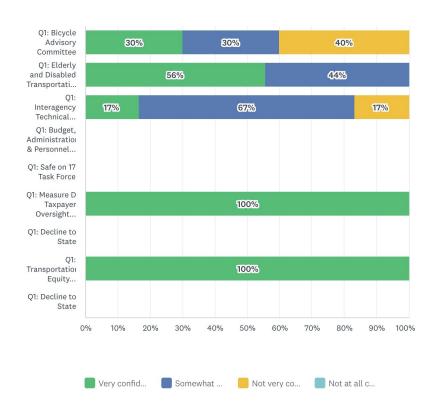


How confident are you in your ability to represent the diverse needs of people in Santa Cruz County in transportation planning discussions?





How confident are you in your ability to represent the diverse needs of people in Santa Cruz County in transportation planning discussions?



Disaggregated by Committee



Themes and Insights: What do you perceive as the main barriers to implementing ADEI initiatives in SCCRTC's transportation projects and programs?

1. Funding and Resource Constraints:

- Inadequate Funding: Respondents frequently mention funding as a significant barrier, noting that it limits the scope and effectiveness of ADEI initiatives.
- Resource Shortages: There is also a concern about having sufficient resources, including time and personnel, to ensure ADEI is properly implemented.

2. Communication and Awareness:

- Complex Language: The use of technical jargon and acronyms can be intimidating for non-experts, hindering effective communication and participation.
- Lack of Awareness: Respondents highlight a lack of awareness about the benefits of DEI and unconscious bias, which can impede progress.
- Inadequate Training: There is a perceived need for more training on DEI issues to enhance understanding and implementation.

3. Representation and Inclusivity:

- Limited Diversity: Advisory committees and SCCRTC staffing are noted as lacking diversity, which can limit perspectives and hinder effective ADEI implementation.
- Dominance of Certain Voices: The loudest voices in meetings are often from white males, which can overshadow other perspectives.
- South County Representation: There is a call for more representation from South County to ensure that local needs are adequately addressed.

4. Project Planning and Community Engagement:

- Ineffective Project Planning: Projects sometimes fail to consult with ADEI experts, leading to overlooked barriers and inequities.
- Community Involvement: Respondents emphasize the importance of involving diverse communities and underserved populations in the planning process.
- Public Awareness: There is a need for better public awareness of the work being done to address ADEI issues.

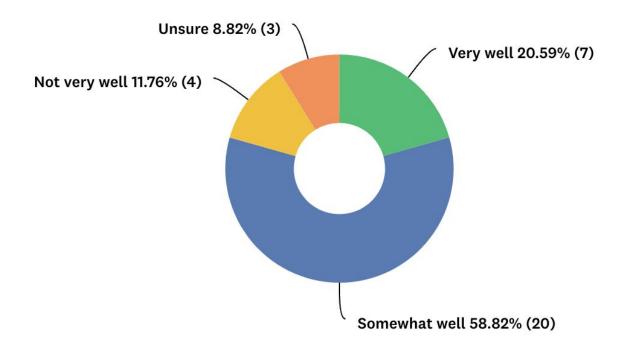
5. Systemic and Administrative Challenges:

- Administrative Hurdles: Time delays and administrative obstacles are seen as barriers to implementing ADEI initiatives effectively.
- Legal and Regulatory Challenges: Changes to federal law or obstruction of existing laws can also hinder progress.

Q10 65

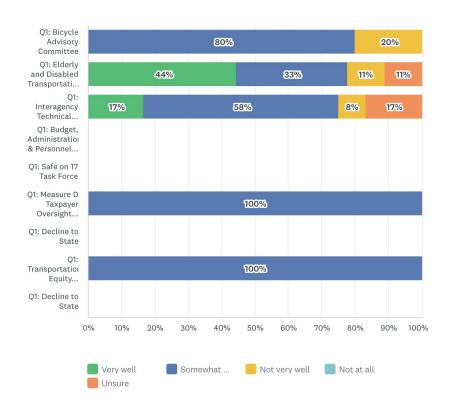


How well do you think the current transportation projects and initiatives of SCCRTC address the needs of all community members equitably?



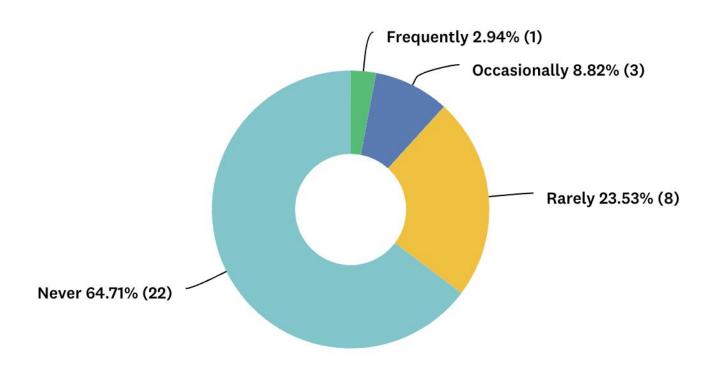


HHow well do you think the current transportation projects and initiatives of SCCRTC address the needs of all community members equitably?



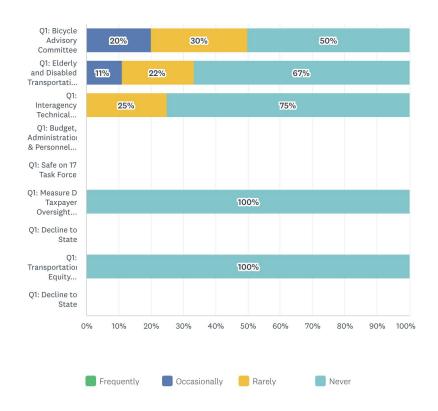


I have encountered accessibility issues while attempting to access RTC offices or meetings, or participate in RTC programs, services, and/or activities.





I have encountered accessibility issues while attempting to access RTC offices or meetings, or participate in RTC programs, services, and/or activities.



Q12 Disaggregated by Committee

Themes and Insights: What specific ADEI-related training topics do you believe would be most beneficial for committee members to receive?

1. Community Engagement:

- Community Engagement Skills and Strategies: This is the most frequently mentioned topic, highlighting the importance of effectively engaging diverse community groups and encouraging public participation.
- Inviting Community Voices: Respondents suggest inviting speakers or media from the community to enhance engagement.

2. Historical Context and Awareness:

- Historical Context of Inequities: Many respondents emphasize the need for training on the historical context of inequities, particularly in understanding the transportation needs of different regions like South County.
- Implicit Bias Training: There is also interest in implicit bias training to help committee members recognize and address unconscious biases.

3. Cultural Competence and Decision Making:

- Cultural Humility and Trauma-Informed Decision Making: Respondents suggest training on cultural humility and trauma-informed decision making to enhance sensitivity and effectiveness in decision-making processes.
- Health in All Policies: This approach is also recommended to ensure that health considerations are integrated into all policy decisions.

4. Practical Experience and Creative Solutions:

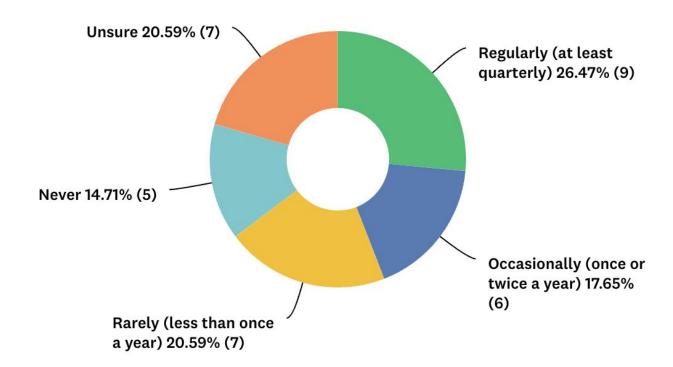
- Experiential Learning: One respondent suggests that committee members should experience using public transportation themselves to better understand its challenges.
- Creative Funding Ideas: There is interest in exploring creative funding strategies to facilitate multiple project completions.

5. Skepticism About Training Programs:

• Critique of Commercialized DEI Programs: Some respondents express skepticism about the value of certain commercialized DEI training programs, preferring practical problem-solving approaches.

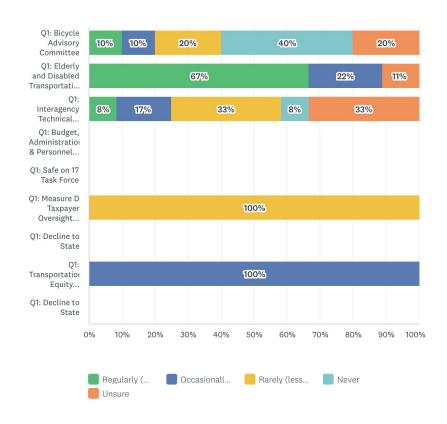


How often does your committee review and assess the ADEI impacts of SCCRTC's projects and initiatives?





How often does your committee review and assess the ADEI impacts of SCCRTC's projects and initiatives?



Disaggregated by Committee

(N)

ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: How can SCCRTC improve its efforts to create a more equitable transportation system in Santa Cruz County?

- 1. Expand and Improve Public Transit and Multimodal Options
 - Respondents emphasize the need for more public transit, multi-modal education, and outreach to underserved communities, including Spanish speakers and students.
 - There is support for focusing on multi-modal solutions and encouraging alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles.
- 2. Increase Community Engagement and Input
 - Many responses highlight the importance of more outreach to diverse communities, transit users, and students
 - Suggestions include more community input, continued discussions, and better communication with the public.
- 3. Resource Allocation and Funding
 - Several respondents call for acquiring additional resources, such as staffing and funding, to support
 equity initiatives.
 - There is a desire to lessen barriers and quicken completion of projects through increased funding.
- 4. Geographic Equity
 - Some responses suggest locating an RTC office in South County and better understanding and addressing the commute needs of that region.
- 5. Organizational Culture and Approach
 - There is a call to move away from paternalistic approaches and to listen to voices that may have been previously dismissed.
 - Respondents recommend making the system more efficient and user-friendly.
- 6. Public Awareness and Transparency
 - Increasing public awareness of SCCRTC's work and maintaining transparency in decision-making is seen as important.

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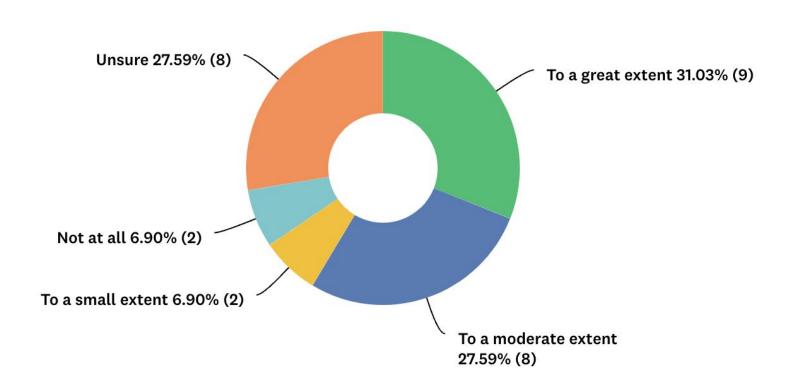
ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: Additional suggestions for improving accessibility and supporting full participation in RTC programs, services, public outreach activities, or decision-making process?

- 1. Increase Outreach and Engagement in Underrepresented Areas
 - Hold more meetings in South County and in community centers or libraries to reach underrepresented communities.
 - Attend events in less represented communities to directly engage with those who may not typically participate.
- 2. Enhance Remote and Flexible Participation
 - Continue to invest in remote participation options, making it easier for more people to join meetings and provide input regardless of location or schedule.
- 3. Targeted Outreach to Families and Youth
 - Reach families and youth where they live, work, and play to ensure their voices are included in transportation planning and decision-making.
- 4. Leverage Large Public Events
 - Conduct public outreach activities at big events to maximize exposure and gather input from a broader segment of the community.
- 5. Collaborate with Community Institutions
 - Foster collaborative efforts between school districts and regional agencies to improve both accessibility and awareness.
 - Consider partnerships that help fund incentives for joining local transportation committees or programs.
- 6. Funding and Incentives
 - Secure additional funding to support accessibility enhancements and provide incentives for participation in transportation programs.
- 7. Broaden Criteria for Engagement
 - Move beyond traditional race, creed, or ability criteria and consider other factors that may affect participation and accessibility.

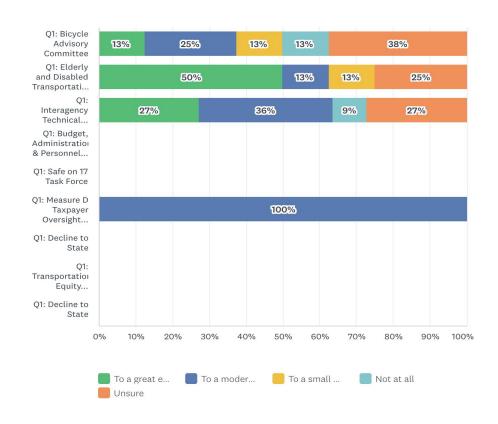


To what extent do you feel your committee's recommendations regarding ADEI are considered and implemented by the SCCRTC?





To what extent do you feel your committee's recommendations regarding ADEI are considered and implemented by the SCCRTC?



O17 Disaggregated by Committee

(N)

ADEI: Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Themes and Insights: How can SCCRTC better support your committee in addressing accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion in transportation projects, planning, and services?

- 1. Meeting Accessibility and Participation
 - Rotate meeting locations to different areas to increase accessibility for a broader range of participants.
 - Provide incentives such as lifetime bus passes for committee members to encourage participation.
- 2. Training and Capacity Building
 - Offer regular training for committee members on ADEI topics to build knowledge and skills.
 - Allow and encourage committee members to attend relevant conferences or external trainings.
- 3. Communication and Representation
 - Ensure committee members can get spokespersons or relevant topics on the agenda for discussion.
 - Make ADEI an open-ended agenda item to allow for ongoing dialogue and responsiveness.
- 4. Recognition and Support
 - Acknowledge and appreciate staff efforts, as several respondents feel SCCRTC staff are doing a great job.
 - Encourage field trips or site visits to better understand accessibility challenges and project impacts.
- 5. Coordination and Collaboration
 - Improve coordination among committees and with SCCRTC staff to address ADEI more effectively.
- 6. Resource Allocation
 - Expand funding and resources, such as specific projects like the Pasatiempo parkway, to enhance accessibility and equity.



Appendix C: SCCRTC Asset Review & TJC Recommendations



Organizational Asset Review & Recommendations

As part of our partnership's support of the Equity Action Plan for the RTC, we have reviewed several of the organizational documents provided to us as part of our assessment, representing over 853 pages of 24 documents. These documents informed our efforts and helped to ground our assessment team in the inner workings of the SCCRTC. On the following pages, we identify specific recommended changes for each document for RTC review and consideration. In the case of reviewing documents over 50 pages, TJC augmented the analysis with AI technologies. This allowed for rapid identification and extraction of key information, patterns, and criteria within the documents that would have been significantly more time-consuming through manual review alone. The AI's role was to enhance the efficiency and initial accuracy of data extraction and analysis. TJC's consultants subsequently leveraged the AI-derived insights as a foundation for developing the criteria that informed the final recommendations contained within this appendix.

TJC is including in this version policies relevant to SCCRTC's external impact and has shared a separate copy of this report with staff, including documents relevant to internal operations.

- 1. Equity Action Plan D5-SCFY23-SCCRTC-Application (53 pages)
- 2. Measure D 2023 Strategic Implementation Plan (192 pages)
- 3. Public Participation Plan 2023 (144 pages)
- 4. SCC RTC Budget FY Ending June 30, 2025 (73 pages)
- 5. <u>2050 SCC Regional Transportation Plan: Goals, Policies, & Targets (6 pages via website)</u>
- 6. SCC RTC Rules & Regulations 2024 (67 pages)
- 7. SCC RTC Five Year Strategic Plan: 2022-2027 (13 pages)
- 8. <u>Title VI Presentation (11 slides)</u>



Equity Action Plan D5-SCFY23 SCCRTC Application

Summary Notes:

This grant application outlines the scope and objectives of the Transportation Equity Action Plan. It emphasizes data-driven equity analysis, proactive community engagement, development of equity performance metrics, and integration of equity into planning and project prioritization. The application identifies disadvantaged communities and proposes a robust stakeholder engagement strategy.

Policy-Focused and Management Recommendations:

- Establish an Equity Workgroup to oversee plan development and implementation.
- Develop and maintain a public outreach toolkit with best practices for engaging marginalized communities.
- Implement data collection and reporting systems to track equity impacts and participation demographics.
- Prioritize transportation investments that reduce disparities and support sustainable, multimodal access.



Measure D 2023 Strategic Implementation Plan

Summary Notes

The 2023 Measure D Strategic Implementation Plan outlines the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's approach to administering a 30-year, half-cent sales tax generating over \$1 billion for transportation improvements. The plan details five major investment categories: Neighborhood Projects (30%), Highway Corridors (25%), Transit for Seniors and People with Disabilities (20%), Active Transportation/Coastal Rail Trail (17%), and Rail Corridor (8%).

This Plan demonstrates strong technical competency in financial planning, project management, and regulatory compliance. However, when analyzed through an equity and inclusion lens, several critical gaps emerge that align directly with the organizational challenges identified in your consulting work.

Geographic Equity Concerns

The Plan lacks explicit analysis of how this formula impacts different communities, particularly South County residents who were identified in your consulting work as underrepresented. There's no discussion of transportation justice or how past planning decisions may have created current inequities.

Recommendations for Geographic Equity

Implement equity impact assessments for all major funding decisions, with particular attention to cumulative impacts on historically marginalized communities. Consider developing supplemental criteria that account for historical underinvestment, community need indicators, and environmental justice concerns.

Community Engagement

While current engagement methods meet legal requirements, several opportunities exist to meet gaps:

- No trauma-informed engagement protocols
- Absence of culturally responsive practices
- Limited accessibility accommodations beyond ADA compliance
- No mention of language accessibility or interpretation services
- Minimal discussion of reaching historically marginalized communities

This directly connects to the conflict resolution sessions where staff expressed frustration about unclear community engagement approaches and limited skill sets in public outreach.

Decision Making Structure

The Plan doesn't address how diverse community perspectives are centered in priority-setting, project selection, or policy development. The Independent Oversight Committee requires geographic and economic diversity but lacks specific requirements for racial, ethnic, or other forms of representation.



Measure D 2023 Strategic Implementation Plan, continued

Policy & Operational Recommendations for Equitable Community Engagement

- Establish formal equity policy requiring equity impact assessments for all projects over \$1 million
- 2. Develop community engagement standards incorporating trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices
- 3. Create accessibility protocol addressing language, physical, economic, and technological barriers
- 4. Implement multi-language interpretation and translation services for all public meetings
- 5. Establish community liaison positions focused on historically marginalized communities
- 6. Create mobile engagement strategies bringing planning discussions directly to affected neighborhoods
- 7. Develop compensation protocols for community members participating in advisory roles
- 8. Require disaggregated demographic data collection for all community engagement activities
- 9. Establish equity metrics for project evaluation beyond technical and financial criteria
- 10. Create public dashboard tracking equity outcomes across all investment categories
- 11. Expand advisory committee composition requirements to ensure meaningful representation from impacted communities
- 12. Create community advisory council with decision-making authority over community engagement protocols
- 13. Establish rotating meeting locations and flexible scheduling to increase accessibility
- 14. Implement mandatory training on historical context of transportation planning impacts on communities of color and low-income communities
- 15. Provide trauma-informed engagement training for all public-facing staff
- 16. Develop cultural competency requirements for project managers and community liaisons
- 17. Develop community-defined success metrics beyond traditional transportation indicators
- 18. Implement regular community satisfaction surveys with disaggregated analysis
- 19. Create accountability mechanisms for equity commitments with clear consequences for non-compliance

Recommendations Specific to Funding Formula Reallocation

- 1. Evaluate and potentially revise allocation formulas to account for historical underinvestment and community need
- 2. Establish dedicated funding stream for equity-focused projects and community-identified priorities
- 3. Create flexibility mechanisms allowing responsive funding for emerging community needs

These recommendations are intended to supplement the main Community Engagement Strategy recommendations in the narrative of our Discovery Report for the SCCRTC.



Public Participation Plan - 2023

Summary Notes

This document outlines strategies for enhancing public participation in transportation planning and decision making in the Monterey Bay region. It establishes processes for public participation in the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) and Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs). It also adheres to federal and state legislation, including IIJA/BIA and FAST Act, focuses on engaging diverse communities, including low-income, minority, and Limited English Proficiency populations, and incorporates eight guiding principles to promote equitable and transparent decision-making.

The Plan includes a strong foundation by outlining several strategies aimed to successfully enhance public participation, including streamlining collaboration between multiple agencies, establishing hybrid meetings and and a multilingual approach, innovative pop up engagement at community locations, partnership with community based organizations, and door to door canvassing in underserved communities. These strategies are all helpful in creating more equitable public participation. However, the Plan still maintains traditional power structures. We recommend a few ways in which the Plan could go beyond these strong foundations from encouraging community engagement to full community empowerment and ownership of the policies and processes that govern their lives.

Recommendations

The SCCRTC can consider how the following bolder actions could advance the agency as a true advocate for equity and a leader in innovative community leadership:

- 1. Establish community-led advisory councils with decision-making authority. Moving beyond making recommendations to actually having a role in decision making with budget allocation authority would demonstrate trust in residents to know what is best for them and the communities they come from.
- 2. Participatory budgeting implementation for community transportation priorities: SCCRTC could start with a 10-15% allocation for community-controlled participatory budgeting processes where residents directly decide which projects receive funding in their neightborhoods.
- 3. Create Community Navigator and capacity building programs: Hire residents from marginalized communities, train them in fundamentals of transportation planning, and activate their leadership as liaisons between their communities and agency decision makers. This tactic also serves as a way to strategically build internal capacity rather than rely on external expertise.
- **4. Begin revenue sharing with Commuinty-Based Organizations:** Follow LA Metro's model by establishing formal partnerships that compensate community organizations for their expertise and outreach work, recognizing them as essential partners rather than volunteer helpers.
- **5. From deficit-based to a strengths-based approach:** Partner with communities to map their existing cultural wealth, assets and social capital into transportation planning.
- **6. Create anti-displacement and and community benefit agreements:** adopt required community-negotiated agreements that include protections against displacement prior to implementing new transportation projects.
- 7. Create intergenerational and Indigenous knowledge integration into existing planning processes: Create formal mechanisms to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and intergenerational wisdom from tribal and long-term community members into transportation planning decisions.



SCCRTC Budget - FY Ending June 30, 2025

Summary Notes

The SCCRTC Amended budget for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025 is a comprehensive document detailing resource allocation and planned organizational and programmatic investments in staffing, active transportation, highway projects, rail transit, and transportation demand management for a total expenditure of approximately \$29.7 million. Sources of funding include Measure D sales tax revenue, Transportation Development Act funds, and federal grants.

Notable Initiatives include Zero emission rail transit development, climate adaptation planning, equity action plan, rural highway safety improvements, and coastal resilience planning.

Recommended Immediate Actions:

- Expedite completion of the Equity Action Plan to establish concrete metrics and accountability measures
- Expand paratransit and specialized transportation funding beyond current Community Bridges allocation
- Ensure all active transportation projects include ADA-compliant infrastructure and wayfinding

Recommended Equity-Focused Program Enhancements:

- Increase funding for Vision Zero bike/pedestrian safety programs in disadvantaged communities
- Prioritize transit connections to affordable housing areas and essential services
- Expand multilingual outreach for public engagement on transportation projects

Recommended Long-term Planning:

- Integrate equity analysis into all Highway 1 corridor and rail projects to prevent displacement
- Develop fare assistance programs for low-income transit users
- Create dedicated funding stream for transportation improvements in underserved rural areas

Recommended Organizational Development:

- Include ADEI training costs in staff development budget
- Establish partnerships with community-based organizations serving disadvantaged populations
- Ensure Taxpayer Oversight Committee and advisory bodies reflect community demographics



2050 SCC Regional Transportation Plan: Goals, Policies, & Targets

Summary Notes:

The 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) sets ambitious goals for reducing vehicle miles traveled, improving safety, cost-effective delivery, climate resilience, and equity. Equity is primarily addressed in Goal #5, with policies and targets focused on disadvantaged populations and equitable funding. However, equity considerations are not fully integrated across all goals, and accountability mechanisms for equity targets are limited.

Policy-Focused Recommendations:

- 1. To deepen the equity impact of these goals, integrate equity analysis and reporting requirements across all RTP goals, not just Goal #5.
- 2. Establish mandatory public reporting on progress toward staff and committee diversity targets (Target 5.B.1).
- 3. Require annual audits of discretionary funding allocation to equity priority communities (Target 5.A.2).
- 4. Link equity funding priorities with climate resilience efforts (Policy 5.4).

Cultural Observations and Recommendations:

In our engagement with the RTC, we have aimed to ground in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) goals with employees, committee members, and board members. From our understanding, these goals were approved by the commission in 2024. While we are confident the RTC socialized the goals at the time, communication and engagement with committee members, board members, and some employees demonstrate that the work is not effectively grounded in these goals. Many members stated they hadn't seen these goals, don't know how the RTC is working towards them, or how their respective role supports the RTC in these efforts. We recommend the following:

Make the RTP goals a standing fixture of every meeting and a part of every project plan. All the work RTC does should be in service of these goals and stakeholders should be clear on how each project, initiative, and activity is in service to them.

By ensuring they are present and socialized in all aspects of the work, the RTC can close this communication and understanding gap. This will also support a more cohesive and unified team culture.



SCC RTC Rules & Regulations - 2024

Summary Notes

This document, titled "Rules & Regulation" of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), revised on May 2, 2024, outlines the regulations and procedures for the conduct of all meetings of the SCCRTC and its committees. It also details the implementation of the Transportation Development Act (TDA) of 1971, as amended, and administrative procedures for federal transportation funding programs. Its purpose is to establish and educate stakeholders on the rules for public meetings and for implementing the TDA, as well as details of submissions of various claims outlined in the TDA.

Recommendations

While the document is descriptive and comprehensive in its purpose of educating stakeholders on these various components of maintaining compliance with the TDA, there are a few opportunities the SCCRTC has to create more accessibility and inclusion when it comes to understanding the document and its detailed contents:

- Add an executive summary to the beginning of the document in plain language. Use a conversational tone and avoid industry jargon. Keep sentences and paragraphs concise for readability.
- 2. Create multiple language versions of the document. If only one copy can be created, prioritize a Spanish language version.
- 3. Consider how the document can be used as a community engagement tool to educate the public, beyond those participating in committee or board service.



SCC RTC Five Year Strategic Plan: 2022-2027

Summary Notes:

The strategic plan articulates RTC's mission, values, and five key initiatives: Collaborative Engagement, Environmental Stewardship, Organizational Excellence, Fiscal Sustainability, and Community. It emphasizes equity as a core value but lacks detailed metrics or accountability mechanisms for equity goals. The plan recognizes workload and culture challenges and calls for continuous improvement.

Policy-Focused Recommendations:

- Develop clear, measurable equity performance metrics and success indicators for all strategic initiatives. This can be done through focused attention incorporating feedback from the TJC research efforts, comments in trainings, as well as the eight group and individual conflict advising sessions.
- Embed equity accountability in organizational culture initiatives and employee development plans. This can be done through focused retreats revisiting the Mission, Vision, and Values of the organization, leadership development, people and talent development by managers and supervisors, and regular, consistent review of performance on projects.
- Enhance collaborative engagement with equity priority communities through targeted outreach and transparent communication. We have included more detail on this in our recommendation of the Priority Area of Community Engagement.
- Align fiscal planning with equity priorities to maximize resources for disadvantaged communities. We recommend this to be a focus area of the SCCRTC moving forward.



Title VI EJ and ADA Nondiscrimination Plan Presentation

TJC's specific recommendations are as follows:

- 1. While it is important to ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements, this presentation would be strengthened by connecting to the RTC's why. The following directive questions will help the RTC arrive at the necessary clarity to address this:
 - a. How does ensuring non-discrimination and equitable access connect to your mission as an agency?
 - b. How does ensuring non-discrimination and equitable access align with your agency's values?
 - c. Answering these questions and including it in the presentation is what takes this from a compliance-only perspective to an operational & cultural perspective. Moving from simply stating requirements to inclusion of clarifying points on "this is how RTC does the work" will mitigate for conflict and confusion and support a more cohesive and unified organizational culture moving forward.
- 2. Slide 4: "Protections afforded under Title VI apply to anyone regardless of whether the individual is lawfully present in the United States, or a citizen of a state within the United States."
 - a. We recommend not using the word "lawfully" and instead offer the following framing: "regardless of immigration status..."
 - b. The language as is introduces a judgment of morality and potential bias. By making this shift you can still get the same message across but in a more inclusive manner.
- 3. Slides 5-7: Responsibilities & Accountability
 - a. We recommend including more information on how RTC is working toward these things. How will the RTC evaluate for effectiveness? How is the RTC defining prompt resolution? Digging in and providing clearer articulation of this will be critical for true accountability.
 - b. We also noticed the language as passive rather than active (ex: waiting for a complaint or providing resources when asked or doing training every two years). We recommend shifting to a more proactive approach (ex. does the agency have a system in place that when someone calls they can request to hear options in the language they are most comfortable with? If not, are translators easily accessible and ready to support when needed? If not, how can the RTC take a more proactive approach to ensuring the resources are available before someone complains about a lack of access?)



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