



Equity in transportation invests resources in disadvantaged communities that are most dependent on active transportation and transit.

Why we must focus our resources in disadvantaged communities:

Many disadvantaged communities – sometimes referred to as vulnerable communities or communities of concern - face significant and persistent inequities due to historical marginalization and systemic disinvestment resulting in a lack of resources, opportunities, and unhealthy and unsafe environments. Disadvantaged communities tend to be the most dependent on active transportation and transit to connect them to economic opportunities and basic needs. Low-income Californians have the highest rates of walking and bicycling, including walking to and from transit. The lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure can deter/impede mobility, particularly for those with disabilities. Engaging disadvantaged communities is vital to ensuring that active transportation options are accessible to everyone in California. Advocates and agency staff must support real, meaningful community engagement for both governmental and organizational decision-making, projects, and programs.

Community Engagement

The following are ways to make a conscious effort to address equity and engage disadvantaged communities in active transportation efforts:

- Proactively and consistently seek input on community needs in the planning stage of projects.
 - Solicit public engagement – implement the decision-making process via robust public outreach and participation.
 - Consider basic needs, including food access, when soliciting participation in community events. Anticipate and arrange for assistance as needed and provide in a non-judgmental and welcoming way.
 - Cultivate diverse community participation in a safe environment to facilitate open/honest discussion.
 - Involve the community in the planning process by partnering with local not-for-profit and/or community groups.
 - Provide opportunities to meet and talk in informal settings, such as local community centers, religious centers, coffee shops, etc., in addition to government offices.
- Consider ‘piggybacking’ onto existing or ongoing local events. Identify events and space where the community is already congregating and partner with that organizer to attend or add-on an engagement activity. Seek permission well in advance of events.
 - Carefully evaluate the use of technology in community engagement and consider a range of approaches to meaningfully engage the full spectrum of community stakeholders.
 - Share information and announcements in ways that people actually receive information, which may include posting fliers, connecting to community networks, using social media, and other outreach methods.
 - Provide opportunities for residents to participate during weekday and weekend times.
 - Host events at schools when parents can drop by after picking up their children.
 - Provide childcare at meetings or make events family-friendly.
 - Give surveys in multiple languages and considering the needs of people who are blind or have low vision and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Anticipate diverse reading levels.
 - Host pop-ups that include demonstration projects for more interactive engagement.
 - Expect difficult, challenging, and sometimes uncomfortable dialogue as part of any robust and meaningful public engagement process with communities that have been historically disenfranchised. Recognize the larger context and potential additional equity ramifications of transportation decision-making.





Consequences of active transportation decisions

- Consider how active transportation improvements affect affordable housing and anti-displacement efforts.
- Consider access to economic opportunity as a critical component of an active transportation effort.
- Recognize how state highway crossings may limit accessibility to or within communities.

Resources to help assess disadvantaged community status

- The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey has data about income, age, race/ethnicity, housing, and more. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>
- California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) helps identify California communities that are most affected by many sources of pollution, and that are especially vulnerable to pollution's effects. <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-40>
- California database of students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/files.asp>
- California's Healthy Places Index (HPI) provides overall scores and more detailed data on specific policy action areas that shape health, like housing, transportation, education, and more. <https://healthyplacesindex.org/>



Additional equity resources

- The Safe Routes Partnership publication, [At the Intersection of Active Transportation and Equity](#), explores the complexities of equitable active transportation and the issues that arise in efforts to advance walking and bicycling and increase health, fairness, and opportunity for low-income communities and communities of color.
- The publication [The New Movement - Bike Equity Today](#), developed by the League of American Cyclists, showcases diverse groups helping to advance bicycle mobility and safety, including low-income cyclists, immigrant populations, and race/ethnic/gender groups who for many years were left out of the bike advocacy community.
- [The Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#) is a national network working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. They offer manuals and toolkits to provide a structure for understanding and working to institutionalize race equity.
- [The California Department of Public Health, Office of Health Equity report: Portrait of Promise: The California Statewide Plan to Promote Health and Mental Health Equity](#) presents background and evidence on the root causes and consequences of health inequities in California. The document illustrates how a broad range of socioeconomic forces, including income security, education and child development, housing, transportation, health care access, and environmental quality, shape the health of entire communities.
- [A Blueprint for Changemakers - Achieving Health Equity Through Law & Policy](#), by ChangeLab Solutions, presents best practices to help policymakers, practitioners, and communities improve health outcomes. It outlines ways to engage diverse community members in the policy process and presents comprehensive strategies to address the fundamental drivers of health inequities.

These definitions are provided as a resource for planning or implementing a Non-Infrastructure (NI) project. For questions, please contact us at ATRC@dot.ca.gov.