

# Mobility justice/equity, community engagement, and a path forward in three Bay Area bus projects

*or*

Keeping the Wheels on the Bus Going Round and Round

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## Acknowledgments

People had lived in and tended California's natural resources for over 10,000 years before the first settlers arrived.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the 1500s,<sup>2</sup> there were a series of systems designed to push out the indigenous population and "civilize" them. For several hundred years, Christian missionaries performed and supported genocide against the native peoples in the Santa Clara Valley and beyond. Without the work of the missionaries, there would have been little room for European settlers to bring their families across the country to begin a new life, and without thousands of years of Indigenous care-taking there certainly would not have been fertile land to attract them in the first place.<sup>3</sup> While the genocide was not complete, the systematic dispossession of land from indigenous communities has severely marginalized them, and the few local lineages remain.

It is important that I recognize and thank the past, present, and future original and rightful stewards of the land I am studying on : the Tamien Nation of the Muwekma Ohlone,<sup>4</sup> who continue to live here and have a connection to their ancestral lands.<sup>5</sup> Muwekma tribal leadership have a standing relationship with the College of Social Sciences,<sup>6</sup> the larger college which contains our Urban and Regional Planning (URBP) department.

I also thank the Confederated Villages of Lisjan, another Ohlone tribe, on whose land I have lived as a guest while writing this, and where the Oakland Tempo BRT project is located. The Sogorea Te' Land Trust is an organization led by Indigenous women who are at the forefront of the land repatriation and cultural revitalization to create "a Bay Area in which Ohlone language and ceremony are an active, thriving part of the cultural landscape, where Ohlone place names and history is known and recognized and where intertribal Indigenous communities have affordable housing, social services, cultural centers and land to live, work and pray on."<sup>7</sup> In addition, San

Francisco is the original territory of the Ramaytush Ohlone and those lands hold two of the bus systems that I studied. The Ramaytush Ohlone are also an active and present stewards of the land of the San Francisco Peninsula, whose work is highlighted by the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone.<sup>8</sup>

In acknowledging and thanking the rightful stewards of these lands, I want to also emphasize the present and continued marginalization of the surviving members of these tribes. Any land use planning that I do must be conducted with the understanding that the land I am planning for may not be in the control of its rightful and ancestral peoples. While we consider the effects of our plans on issues like redlining and access to services, we must also make genuine efforts to ensure that native / indigenous voices are included in those conversations.

Other thank yous are extended to my advisor, Dr Serena Alexander, for her support and feedback throughout this whole process; to Dr Charles Rivasplata and Dr Richard Lee, the Statler and Waldorf of urban planning, for planting the seed of bus rapid transit in my head during my very first semester at SJSU; to my classmates and co-conspirators, particularly Lydon, Manee, Rina, Ana, and Ngan, who listened to me ramble and rant about this topic for two and a half years, and gave feedback on drafts; to the warm and immobile Peanut, our neighbor's cat whose chonky presence on my lap got me through a couple drafts; to my sister and my parents for their support in reading drafts and talking through aspects of this project from ideas to final product; to everyone who spoke with me for an interview for my research – your insights were invaluable, and I hope I captured your feedback appropriately; and above all to my husband Neil for his unwavering support throughout this whole grad school process and for making sure that I ate and took walks at regular intervals.

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Previous page : Photo of the "We Are Still Here" mural in San José by Alfonso Salazar, from [SJ Walls](#).

1 M Kat Anderson, *Tending the wild : Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

2 "Spanish California | Early California History," in *Early California History: An Overview*, California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849 to 1900 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), accessed April 21, 2022

3 For a fuller explanation of the history of native peoples' working of the land in California, the impacts of the Mission system, and the interaction between native and settler populations, see Anderson, *Tending the wild*.

4 "Tamien Nation Lands," website, accessed November 21, 2021

5 "Tamien Nation," website, accessed November 21, 2021

6 "Our Region," accessed November 21, 2021

7 "Purpose and Vision," website, accessed November 21, 2021

8 "The Association of Ramaytush Ohlone," website, accessed November 21, 2021

## Executive Summary

Imagine, if you don't already, depending on the bus stop a few blocks away to get to your work, shopping, appointments, most anything outside of your home life. Now imagine walking up to see a paper sign saying that this bus stop is no longer in use. How does this happen out of the blue?

The planning processes that decide bus stops and routes, or even the existence of a bus system at all, are largely opaque and invisible despite their impact on our everyday lives. How can individuals who depend on these systems influence these decisions?

My research begins with mobility justice and equity frameworks from The Greenlining Institute,<sup>9</sup> the Untokening convening,<sup>10</sup> and TransitCenter<sup>11</sup> that help agencies and municipalities connect with the communities their plans affect, to address past harms and uplift marginalized voices. I also summarize methods for organizing communities for self-advocacy (extensions to Arnstein's Ladder), other methods for involving the public in planning decisions (psychological ownership and participatory planning), and outcomes of various implementations of these methods. I then use these ideas to evaluate the community outreach work that was conducted for bus rapid transit in San Francisco and Oakland, including interviews with professional planners and community members, and analyzing feedback from local community members.

The underlying mobility justice work that can be applied to all transit projects boils down to the same basic idea : any transit project must be planned in conjunction with the affected communities. And any equitable project will involve the most disadvantaged and under-represented



### Mobility Justice

recognizes that communities are often treated as if they are **unfit to design their own futures, guide public spending, or understand the "real" issues at hand** – and demands that new decisionmaking systems and structures are created by and for these communities to center their visions and cultivate operating principles that align with their values and lived experiences.

Communities must be able to reject oppressive frameworks and processes and create systems and spaces centered in our experiences. Decisionmaking processes must meet communities where they are, and embrace full leadership from these communities – not in ratifying or amending pre-ordained ideas but building new ways of interacting and sharing power.

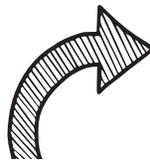


Figure 1: Overview of Mobility Justice concepts, emphasizing the need for community control of planning processes and how current systems ignore actual community needs.

Source : [Principles of Mobility Justice](#)

9 *Mobility Equity Framework* (Oakland: Greenlining Institute, 2018)

10 [Principles of Mobility Justice](#)

11 "Equity in Practice : A guidebook for transit agencies," 2021

voices before professional planners. But this is a slow and humbling process for people used to making top-down decisions based on quantifiable data. It means truly listening to a community's needs and being ready to bridge gaps when conflicts arise, because they will.

One common thread in both the feedback I found and my interviews was around the length of time between community feedback sessions and actual plan implementation. Especially as communities take more control over planning processes, it is crucial that bureaucratic and legislative delays be minimized in an effort to enact the changes that these communities are striving for in a timely fashion. Community needs and members shift over the multiple decades that it takes to bring bus rapid transit to a corridor, so what can be done to improve transit services in the meanwhile? Projects with multiple milestones and scales, like providing dedicated bus lanes while waiting to build a subway, will need to become more common again in the interest of addressing immediate problems while still looking forward to future improvements. This component of timeliness, I argue, is a crucial aspect of integrating principles of mobility justice and equity into planning.

In all of this work, transit planners need to be mindful of whose perspectives have the most influence not just on the shape of projects but also what projects are planned. We come back to principles of mobility justice and equity – it is crucial that planners understand the historic and systemic inequities in the communities that our plans affect, and that we work to remediate these inequities rather than deepen them. When we planners work together with marginalized community members to overcome historic barriers, working bottom-up instead of top-down we can build towards mobility justice for all.

As planners, we hold a very specific type of power that shapes communities and their access to services.<sup>12</sup> All types of planning must be done with an eye to understanding potential disproportionate impacts on disadvantaged communities. It is crucial that we create ways for these communities to access that power by specifically giving them a say in the planning process. In order to build “healthy and inclusive communities” we have to understand our own power and privilege so that we can understand how to co-create with those who do not have access to the same systems.<sup>13</sup> This broader approach to building community power allows individuals to build their own connections and relationships within communities that create resilience and a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community that leads to increased positive outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Because transportation is an issue that cuts across all others, it is even more important that transit projects are planned in line with MJE principles.

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12 USC Price, *Emerging Scholars Transportation Research Symposium: Welcome & Session 1*, March 2021, accessed November 4, 2021

13 Ascala Sisk et al., *Confronting power and privilege for inclusive, equitable, and healthy communities*, technical report (April 2020)

14 Jon L Pierce, Tatiana Kostova, and Kurt T Dirks, “Toward a Theory of Psychological Ownership in Organizations,” *Academy of Management Review* 26, no. 2 (April 2001)

Community, like the sacred, is an idea that becomes reality because we believe in it.

– Mary Catherine Bateson



# 1 Introduction

People are mobile but looking around shows that who moves where and how is determined largely by a perverse combination of historic planning decisions and capitalism. As planners, it is crucial that we understand our place in that history as well as work towards equity and justice in the communities that our plans affect – the decisions we make will shape lives for generations. We need to work with communities to understand their needs and lived experiences before planning top-down solutions. This approach is the core of mobility justice / equity (MJE) in transit planning. Justice has always been at the core of mobilities research, and various other threads eventually tied

into it, of climate and environmentalism and social inequity.<sup>15</sup> Because planning has long been a tool for upholding white supremacy and racism through racially-motivated land use decisions<sup>16</sup> we planners must do the hard work to bring equity back into planning and rebuilding community trust. We must turn the focus of transit planning away from simply maximizing travel speeds and other quantitative metrics<sup>17</sup> to wholistic goals for, and determined by, communities.

The field of MJE came from a confluence of social and environmental justice work with the understanding of how these issues are intertwined with transportation planning, and how any truly equitable solution will come from working with disadvantaged communities first. (Figure 2 on page 5) Transportation and accessibility have been demonstrated since the early 1970s to



Successful development should be defined by effects on people, not economic efficiency. Benefits of neighborhood changes must accrue most to those who live in the community and historically have experienced the most neglect. Sustainable, equitable mobility projects take place in landscapes where profit-sharing models are plentiful.

Figure 2: Mobility justice is more than a simple melding of two terms from different fields. It means centering community members and their lived experiences over quantitative data or other administrative needs in planning projects.

Source : *Principles of Mobility Justice*

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Previous page : photo from [Open Institute](#) on flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0).

15 Mimi Sheller, "Chapter 1 : Mobility Justice," in *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications for Mobilities*, ed. Monika Büscher et al. (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, August 18, 2020), pg 11.

16 Richard A. Marcantonio et al., "Confronting Inequality in Metropolitan Regions: Realizing the Promise of Civil Rights and Environmental Justice in Metropolitan Transportation Planning," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 44 (2017)

17 Todd Alexander Litman, "Evaluating Transportation Equity : Guidance for Incorporating Distributional Impacts in Transport Planning," *Victoria Transportation Policy Institute*, April 2022,

play a key role in social outcomes, both in its presence and its absence<sup>18</sup> and that there are direct as well as indirect ways that lack of transport interacts negatively in a downward spiral for those who are already socially disadvantaged. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and any plan will need to be customized to local needs.<sup>19</sup> This is where the frameworks I am going to review come in – they allow communities to help build their own recommendations for what works for them. MJE is a way of breaking down tools of white supremacist power in planning by uplifting and centering marginalized communities' needs, and I hope that by shifting the perspective of these institutions and systems towards a more people-centric vision of planning we can build a future that is more equitable, accessible, and functional for everyone.<sup>20</sup>

True MJE begins when historically marginalized communities are at the core of the planning process and are able to bring their ideas to the table in a collaborative and influential way.<sup>21</sup> Ensuring that community voices are incorporated into the process is crucial, in the spirit of the disability community's "nothing about us without us" slogan.<sup>22</sup> If we do not include the voices of those we claim to be planning for in our processes, how do we know what they truly need? MJE is built on a foundation of community outreach and understanding, not just at the level of educating the public about planned projects but to understand their needs and the barriers they face so that projects that address the core issues can be co-created. Planners are used to gathering numerical data and basing decisions on those quantifiable categories, but the process of community feedback is a messy one. While many aspects of disenfranchisement can be reduced to numbers, some can only be understood through personal lived experiences. In order to build a more just and equitable field of planning, the needs of marginalized people must be uplifted and these lived experiences are valued at the same level as quantifiable data. We must examine the base assumptions on which we build our planning decisions – something that a lens of MJE also forces us to see in the supposedly impartial data-driven solutions proposed based on these unquestioned boundaries and categories.

Mobilities happen on many scales, from the individual to the global (and possibly interplanetary someday). However, Hidayati *et al.* conducted a thorough analysis and found two base assumptions about mobility – that it can be a physical or social practice.<sup>23</sup> The latter relies heavily on concepts around the freedom to travel and other sociocultural constructs around travel.<sup>24</sup> While some of those issues are broadly related to the specific bus rapid transit (BRT) projects I

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18 Martin Wachs and T. Gordon Kumagai, "Physical accessibility as a social indicator," *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences* 7, no. 5 (October 1, 1973)

19 Karen Lucas, "Transport and social exclusion: Where are we now?," *Transport Policy*, URBAN TRANSPORT INITIATIVES, 20 (March 1, 2012)

20 For an overview of the multitude of approaches, see Isti Hidayati, Wendy Tan, and Claudia Yamu, "Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality: Mobility and Accessibility for the Marginalized," *Journal of Planning Literature* 36, no. 4 (November 2021) and Nancy Cook and David Butz, eds., *Mobilities, Mobility Justice and Social Justice* (London: Routledge, October 2018)

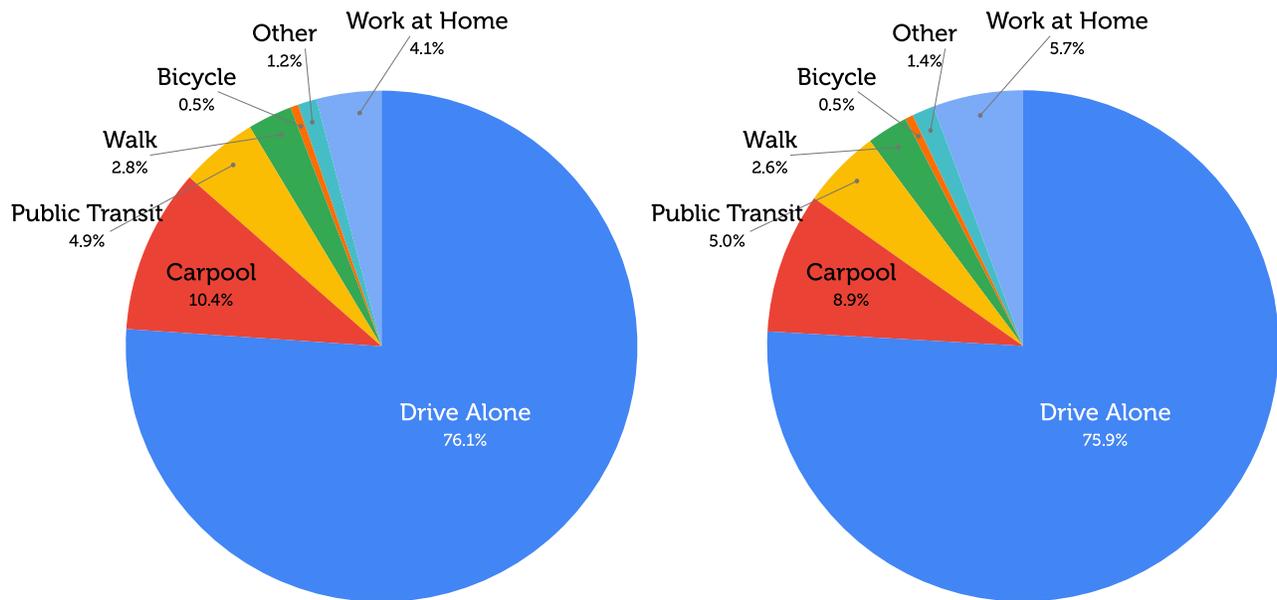
21 [Mobility Equity Framework](#)

22 Rachel Garaghty, "'Nothing About Us Without Us' ... including the use of this slogan," via archive.org, November 2019

23 Hidayati, Tan, and Yamu, "[Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality](#)"

24 Mimi Sheller, *Mobility Justice : The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2018)

am investigating, they are somewhat tangential. It is the physical act of moving from origin to destination that I am looking at in my analysis here, largely because of the narrow focus of this project on three specific bus routes in the San Francisco Bay Area. My focus here is primarily on the people-centric aspect of BRT planning to ensure that historically marginalized and under-invested communities are well engaged in the planning processes that affect their lives. I argue that part of this effort includes building the staying power that communities will need to effect systemic change involves working beyond the project level, drawing on work around participatory budgeting and labor organizing for building the critical political power that will create both opportunity and resilience.



(a) 2010 ACS 5-year Estimates : Commute Mode

(b) 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates : Commute Mode

Figure 3: Comparing commute-to-work modes from American Community Survey data predictions, the biggest change is an increase in the number of people working at home. The uptick in public transportation commuters and decrease in driving alone is hopeful, but does not account for the nearly 2% increase in working from home.

Source : *COMMUTING CHARACTERISTICS BY SEX*, US Census Data (American Community Survey), accessed May 11, 2022.

For personal transportation and mobility, cars have reigned supreme in the US. Car ownership is still a very real path to independence for many, both economic (through access to more job locations) and personal (the ability to go where you want when you want).<sup>25</sup> Until public and active transportation infrastructure is reliable and high-quality, it will be difficult to reduce individual car ownership.<sup>26</sup> From the data in Figure 3 on page 7, we can see that there is not much change in commute modes in the last decade and driving alone still reigns supreme. The preva-

25 Urvi Neelakantan, Evelyn Blumenberg, and Martin Schwartz, *The Importance & Impact of Cars for Family Economic Success*, December 2010, accessed May 11, 2022

26 Joanna Moody et al., "The Value of Car Ownership and Use in the United States," *Nature Sustainability* 4, no. 9 (September 2021)

lence of work-from-home opportunities made possible in the COVID-19 pandemic and the use of private vehicles as protection from spreading the virus will likely keep that steady for years to come.<sup>27</sup> It is crucial that any public and active transit projects addressing climate change, social isolation, and individual mobility be easy and quick to implement, and buses fit that bill neatly. Most of the infrastructure has already been built and is a known quantity – roads, vehicles, depots, fueling, maintenance – and they can reach areas more easily than trains. By working to build better bus systems, we can address multiple issues of inequity at once.

My aim with this report is to provide tools to planners to “elevate community needs and power in transportation planning, decisions, and funding.”<sup>28</sup> The frameworks that I review can be used to evaluate projects after the fact to understand where improvements can be made to processes, but ideally they will be used as a guide to help agencies and municipalities build better planning processes from the ground up before projects are planned. I review three specific frameworks<sup>29</sup> and several tools that have been used to engage the public in planning processes. Building upon a specific set of criteria from one of the frameworks, I evaluate the community outreach work that was (or is being) done for AC Transit’s 1 Tempo BRT system that runs from Oakland to San Leandro along International Boulevard, as well as two projects in San Francisco along Geary Boulevard and Van Ness Avenue. The former was decided during the writing of this paper to no longer be a BRT system, but the opening of BRT service on the Van Ness corridor happened at a particularly convenient time in my writing process to provide excellent data.

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27 For a discussion of the impact of Transportation Network Companies (ride-hailing services) on public transit and car ownership, please see Mi Diao, Hui Kong, and Jinhua Zhao, “Impacts of Transportation Network Companies on Urban Mobility,” *Nature Sustainability* 4, no. 6 (June 2021).

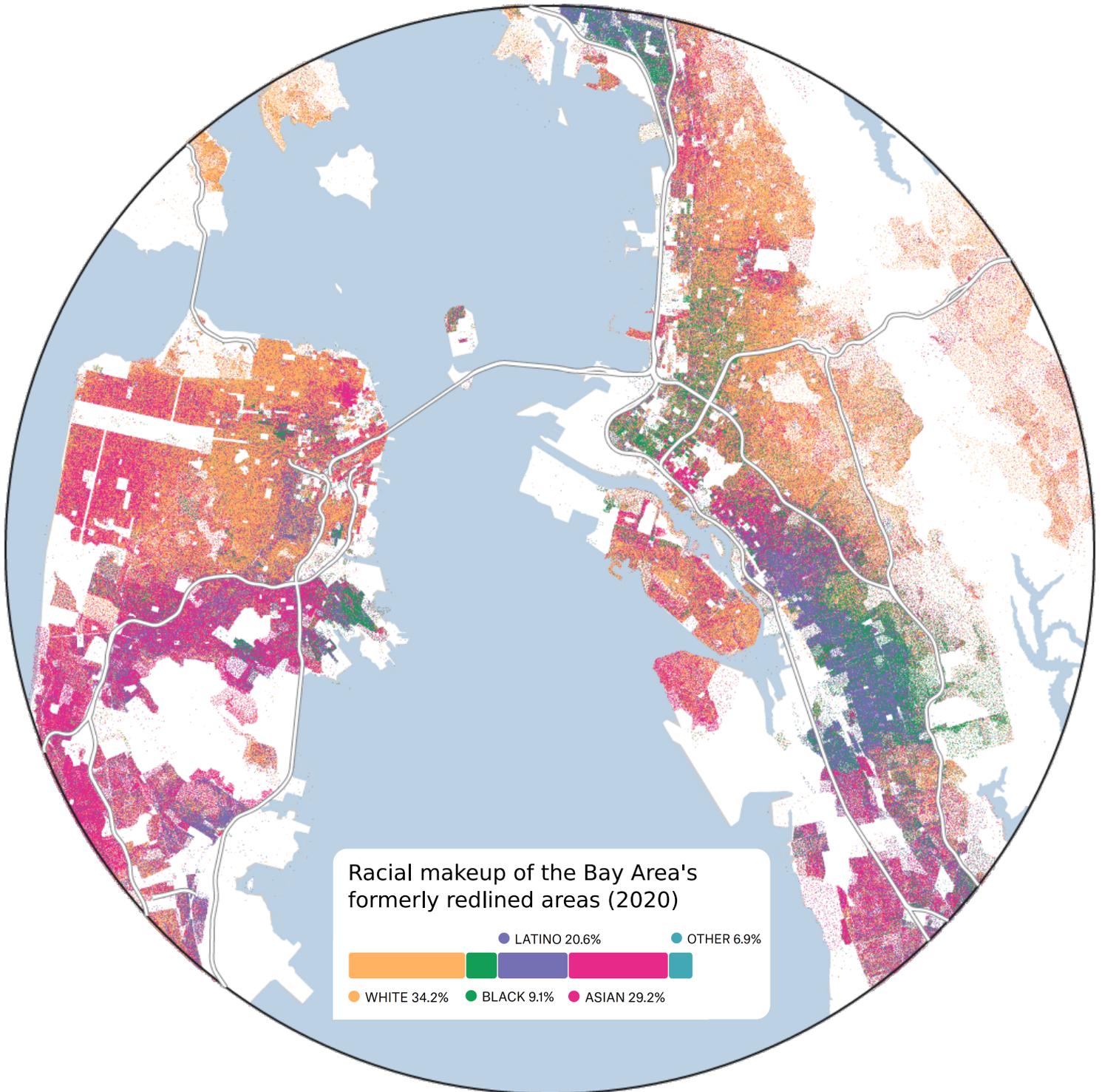
For a discussion of the impacts of COVID-19 on transit in the US, please see Luyu Liu, Harvey J. Miller, and Jonathan Scheff, “The Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Public Transit Demand in the United States,” *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 11 (November 2020) and Yi Qi et al., “Impacts of COVID-19 on Public Transit Ridership,” *International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology*, November 2021.

Although it is touched on in the previous two articles as well, the following is a deeper dive into the inequalities in who can and cannot work from home during the pandemic : Shelly Tan et al., “Amid the Pandemic, Public Transit Is Highlighting Inequalities in Cities,” *Washington Post*, May 2020, chap. National, accessed May 11, 2022.

28 [Mobility Equity Framework](#)

29 [Mobility Equity Framework](#) and [Principles of Mobility Justice](#) and “Pick Up the Tempo: Lessons From Oakland’s 20-Year BRT Saga,” *TransitCenter Blog*, September 17, 2020

We, as people who have inherited an ignoble planning history of racism and injustice, have a duty to both understand these community vulnerabilities to prevent, not just mitigate, harm from our planning and projects, especially in the realm of transportation.



## 2 Mobility Justice / Equity

Mobility is a large term that encompasses many definitions and variations. Aside from the basic “movement of people and goods” there are details of mass migration,<sup>30</sup> logistics,<sup>31</sup> and policy<sup>32</sup> that are their own sub-specialties of study – public health, psychology, communications, and more.<sup>33</sup> All of these are based on current power structures and their imbalances.<sup>34</sup> The field of planning is based on definitions of boundaries by power structures to create quantifiable data from messy human lives,<sup>35</sup> upheld by and upholding white supremacist ideas to push those messy qualitative humans into quantifiable data.<sup>36</sup> Planners at all levels must take these tools and opportunities to do the uncomfortable but

# See structural BARRIERS

Streets, infrastructure, and transportation are intimately tied to the human experience. For many, mobility is shaped by deliberately designed barriers, including the use of highways or rail lines to divide communities, and the stigmatization of transportation methods used by low-income and communities of color.

Figure 4: Structural barriers go beyond the physical ones that prevent cars from driving on sidewalks or similar. It can also include issues of redlining, environmental racism, and outside perceptions of residents. Understanding the interplay of these issues in a community is crucial to helping them achieve their mobility goals.

Source : [Principles of Mobility Justice](#)

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Previous page : Map of racial makeup of formerly redlined zones in the San Francisco and East Bay, based on 2020 US Census data, from Elena Mejia and Ryan Best, *The Lasting Legacy Of Redlining*, February 2022, accessed May 8, 2022. Quote from Margaretta Lin et al., *East Oakland Displacement Status and Impacts from the BRT Project Summary*, technical report (Oakland: Just Cities, June 2021), accessed March 30, 2022.

30 Alison Blunt, “Cultural geographies of migration: mobility, transnationality and diaspora,” *Progress in human geography* 31, no. 5 (October 2007); Andrew Gorman-Murray, “Intimate mobilities: emotional embodiment and queer migration,” *Social & cultural geography* 10, no. 4 (June 2009); Russell King, “Geography and Migration Studies: Retrospect and Prospect,” *Population, Space and Place* 18, no. 2 (March 2012); Joris Schapendonk et al., “Re-routing migration geographies: Migrants, trajectories and mobility regimes,” *Geoforum* 116 (November 2018)

31 Deborah Cowen, *The deadly life of logistics: mapping the violence of global trade* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minneapolis Press, 2014)

32 Jamie Peck, “Geographies of policy: From transfer-diffusion to mobility-mutation,” *Progress in human geography* 35, no. 6 (December 2011)

33 A.C. Davidson, “Radical Mobilities,” *Progress in Human Geography* 45, no. 1 (February 2021)

34 Davidson, 2.

35 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, October 1, 2008) and Caroline Mullen and Greg Marsden, “Mobility Justice in Low Carbon Energy Transitions,” *Energy Research & Social Science*, Energy Demand for Mobility and Domestic Life: New Insights from Energy Justice, 18 (August 2016)

36 Marcantonio et al., “[Confronting Inequality in Metropolitan Regions](#)”

necessary work of shaking the foundations of our assumptions and data about the world in favor of the lived experience of those we are supposed to be planning for. It is critical that we understand the history and underpinnings of our perspectives if we are going to make positive change and progress towards justice and equity.

## 2.1 Current Status of MJE in Planning

While there are some statutory requirements for a baseline of public engagement from the national to agency level, much of it is about ticking regulation boxes rather than digging deeply into the level of community engagement and participation that leads to equity and justice. Federally, FTA Title VI (1964 Civil Rights Act) Circular 2012<sup>37</sup> stipulates a minimum of analysis of “major” changes to fare or service by a transit agency to ensure it does not have a “disparate impact” on communities of color. California’s General Plan, used by every city for their own plans as well as defining state-wide minimums, dedicates a chapter to community engagement.<sup>38</sup> However, neither of these documents examine the specifics of building community power or empowering communities to start planning processes themselves based on needs within that community; everything is still based on top-down planning by professionals and relies on their level of interest in engaging with affected communities. Both local and federal regulation documents lay out a series of steps that go from basic “inform about decisions that have been made” to “let the community help make decisions.” In addition to such “sunshine laws,” most local municipalities have other laws for citizen comment on plans in progress.<sup>39</sup> This places the burden on individual community members, though, to both be aware of the local laws and opportunities to comment as well as taking the initiative to make comments. What current systems do not include by default are options for building community power to address issues of racism or the systematic disenfranchisement of non-white groups within communities. It is through MJE frameworks that we can take that next step and dive deeper into building community power to expand “community engagement” to include addressing historical injustices within communities.

It is also critical to address the issue of “performative equity work”<sup>40</sup> – practices that claim to move processes towards equity but in fact are continuing to promote the existing systems of inequity and marginalization. Many projects have gathered input from affected communities but failed to act on it; this can come from a nebulous of understanding of equity work. In ensuring that equity itself is well-defined, a number of positive outcomes flow naturally including defined parameters for community engagement practices and thoughtful engagement of marginalized communities. While these conversations may be uncomfortable for planners, particularly those in dominant and privileged groups, this is where the transformative work happens.<sup>41</sup>

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37 “Title VI; Final Circular,” *Federal Register*, Notices, 77, no. 167 (August 2012), accessed May 7, 2022

38 *General Plan Guidelines and Technical Advisories* (Sacramento, CA: Office of Planning and Research, 2017), Chapter 3 : Community Engagement and Outreach.

39 *How-to: Make community engagement work for you*, 4 Degrees to the Streets, hosts Nimo & Jas (November 1, 2021), podcast, 11:10-12:20.

40 Sarah R. McCullough and Sequoia Erasmus, “Assessing the Impact of Equity Work in Transportation,” *Institute of Transportation Studies*, September 2021,

41 [McCullough and Erasmus](#), 15.



Figure 5: Making tangible progress towards MJE means involving marginalized and under-represented groups in all decisions, including those of process. If the processes do not change, neither will the outcomes because the processes of planning are designed to uphold racist urban planning methods.

Source : *Principles of Mobility Justice*

reinforces existing structural inequalities in leisure time and social resources along lines of race and class. Public hearings in the US are usually held in the evenings that run for arbitrary lengths of time in locations (and at times) that are often inconvenient by public transit or require technology access. These schedules best accommodate those with 9-to-5 work, access to child care or other household support, no other demands on their leisure time, and are comfortable with public speaking in English.

While some of the remote options necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic have opened more doors to multi-lingual participation and the ability to attend meetings from home, they still rely on technology that is not universally available. And the onus is still placed on individuals, particularly the marginalized and under-represented, to know about these meetings and how to make their opinions heard on the planning issues being discussed. The multiple barriers of access, understanding, and advocacy result in already-dominant perspectives continuing to

The purpose of using an MJE lens to conduct community outreach is to move beyond simply ticking regulatory boxes. One thing is clear from these regulations and the all-too-common backlash against planning projects is that current efforts do not work. The public is not satisfied with the current state of community engagement practices for many reasons : people do not feel that their concerns are being heard, that they have little to no influence on the ultimate outcomes, and many populations are excluded entirely from what limited process exists.<sup>42</sup> This latter aspect is one of the biggest barriers to authentic community engagement on planning projects. The basic setup of public meetings

42 Judith E. Innes and David E. Booher, "Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st Century," *Planning Theory & Practice* 5, no. 4 (December 2004) For a thorough examination of several different types of public participation in planning processes, and proposals for alternatives, see also Marcus B. Lane, "Public Participation in Planning: An Intellectual History," *Australian Geographer* 36, no. 3 (November 2005)

be the drivers of planning projects.<sup>43</sup> In order to shift the base assumptions that underpin these projects, it is crucial to involve others in the planning processes. It is time for community engagement to shift to people-centric, community-driven processes rather than continuing to rely on the same structures that have build the racist and segregated cities we live in today.<sup>44</sup>

## 2.2 What is Mobility Justice / Equity?

The deep integration of ideas of justice and equity in transportation planning has been a slow process, but is picking up steam. Issues of power and privilege have always been present in the planning profession and can be considered to be the underpinning of much of the racial and social injustice today.<sup>46</sup> Because the field of study of mobility, justice, and equity is so broad there are several other terms that are used in planning literature and practices that have been used interchangeably with MJE :

- *transport disadvantage*,<sup>47</sup> where individuals are disadvantaged in accessing and utilizing transport services;
- *transport inequality*,<sup>48</sup> where there is unequal ability to access transport infrastructures and services across socioeconomic groups. Emphasis is on how processes and outcomes are equally important; therefore, the group addressed needs consideration,<sup>49</sup>
- *transport poverty*,<sup>50</sup> where individuals are unable to afford transportation costs, have limited mobility options, and experience difficulties in accessing key functions;

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43 Innes and Booher, "Reframing Public Participation"

44 This is a topic that has been well explored by others. Further details can be found in Julian Agyeman, "Urban Planning as a Tool of White Supremacy – the Other Lesson from Minneapolis," *The Conversation*, accessed November 5, 2021, <sup>45</sup>, Edward G. Goetz, Rashad A. Williams, and Anthony Damiano, "Whiteness and Urban Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 86, no. 2 (April 2020), Hidayati, Tan, and Yamu, "Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality," Lane, "Public Participation in Planning," Marcantonio et al., "Confronting Inequality in Metropolitan Regions," Sarah R. McCullough and Rebecca van Stokkum, *Answers from the Margins: Participatory Planning with Disadvantaged Communities*, technical report (UC Institute of Transportation Studies, March 2021), Sarah R. McCullough and Sequoia Erasmus, "Assessing the Impact of Equity Work in Transportation," *Institute of Transportation Studies*, September 2021, José W. Meléndez and Brenda Parker, "Learning in Participatory Planning Processes: Taking Advantage of Concepts and Theories Across Disciplines," *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (January 2019), and many more.

46 For an overview of issues of equity and justice in transit planning, see Rafael H.M. Pereira and Alex Karner, "Transportation Equity," in *International Encyclopedia of Transportation*, ed. Roger Vickerman (Oxford: Elsevier, 2021). For a deep dive into theoretical mobility justice frameworks "across various scales and contexts" see Cook and Butz, *Mobilities, Mobility Justice and Social Justice* and Marcantonio et al., "Confronting Inequality in Metropolitan Regions"

47 David Denmark, "The Outsiders: Planning and Transport Disadvantage," *Journal of planning education and research* 17, no. 3 (March 1998); Alexa Delbosc and Graham Currie, "Exploring the Relative Influences of Transport Disadvantage and Social Exclusion on Well-being," *Transport policy* 8, no. 4 (2011); Alexa Delbosc and Graham Currie, "Transport Problems that Matter – Social and Psychological Links to Transport Disadvantage," *Transport policy* 19, no. 1 (2011)

48 David Banister, *Inequality in Transport* (Marcham, Oxfordshire: Alexandrine Press, 2018)

49 Ersilia Verlinghieri and Tim Schwanen, "Transport and mobility justice: Evolving discussions," *Journal of transport geography* 87 (July 2020)

50 Karen Lucas et al., "Transport Poverty and Its Adverse Social Consequences," *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers* 169, no. 6 (December 2016); Giulio Mattioli, Karen Lucas, and Greg Marsden, "Transport Poverty and Fuel Poverty in the UK: From Analogy to Comparison," *Transport Policy* 59 (October 2017)

- *transport-related social exclusion*,<sup>51</sup> where the inability to access transport infrastructures and services, as induced by individual attributes, the transport system, or mixed of both, increases the risk of being socially excluded;
- *transport justice*,<sup>52</sup> where the distribution of resources via the maximax and maximin principles are discussed,<sup>53</sup> and
- *mobility justice*, where time and scale transcending understandings of mobility<sup>54</sup> are geared toward co-creation of solutions.<sup>55 56</sup>

These many shades of definition all share a core concept : working together in coalition to ensure that everyone, especially those without access to private vehicles, have access to the same opportunities.<sup>57</sup> More specifically, Adonia Lugo's description of "address[ing] how street safety goes beyond car-based violence" adds the need to address why individuals feel safe or unsafe using streets in a community at the local level,<sup>58</sup> and not just through an automotive-centric lens.<sup>59</sup> Both of these introductions start to get at why MJE is so critical for planners to address and hint at the reasons that the frameworks in the next section all begin with community.

On a practical level, there are several frameworks that have been published over the years as guidelines for "doing" MJE on the ground that are applicable to all kinds of projects. Both Transit Center<sup>60</sup> and the Untokening<sup>61</sup> explicitly address transportation and MJE. The Greenlining Institute<sup>62</sup> lists general guidelines for ways of building authentic community engagement practices to support any project. These three organizations' work aims to bend the arc of transportation planning towards justice,<sup>63</sup> which is why I am focusing on these specific documents.

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- 51 Andrew Church, Martin Frost, and K Sullivan, "Transport and Social Exclusion in London," *Transport policy* 7, no. 3 (2000); Susan Kenyon, Glenn Lyons, and Jackie Rafferty, "Transport and Social Exclusion: Investigating the Possibility of Promoting Inclusion through Virtual Mobility," *Journal of transport geography* 10, no. 3 (2002); Karen Lucas, "Transport and Social Exclusion: Where Are We Now?," *Transport policy* 20 (March 2012)
- 52 Karel Martens, "Justice in Transport as Justice in Accessibility: Applying Walzer's 'Spheres of Justice' to the Transport Sector," *Transportation* 39 (February 2012); Karel Martens, *Transport Justice: Designing Fair Transportation Systems* (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017)
- 53 Verlinghieri and Schwanen, "[Transport and mobility justice](#)"
- 54 Sheller, *Mobility Justice : The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes*; John Urry, "The 'System' of Automobility," *Theory, culture & society* 21, nos. 4-5 (October 2004)
- 55 Verlinghieri and Schwanen, "[Transport and mobility justice](#)"
- 56 Hidayati, Tan, and Yamu, "[Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality](#)"
- 57 "Mobility Justice," Rooted in Rights
- 58 Lynda Lopez, "What does mobility justice mean? Reflections on last weekend's Untokening event," StreetsBlog Chicago, October 11, 2019
- 59 Cara Hamann, Corinne Peek-Asa, and Brandon Butcher, "Racial disparities in pedestrian-related injury hospitalizations in the United States," *BMC Public Health* 20, no. 1 (September 25, 2020) and CDCMMWR, "QuickStats: Age-Adjusted Pedestrian Death Rates, by Race/Ethnicity — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2009 and 2018," *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69 (2020)
- 60 "[Equity in Practice : A guidebook for transit agencies](#)"
- 61 [Principles of Mobility Justice](#)
- 62 [Mobility Equity Framework](#)
- 63 Used with apologies to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Theodore Parker. For more history of the quote, please see Garson O'Toole, "The Arc of the Moral Universe Is Long, But It Bends Toward Justice," Quote Investigator, November 15, 2012

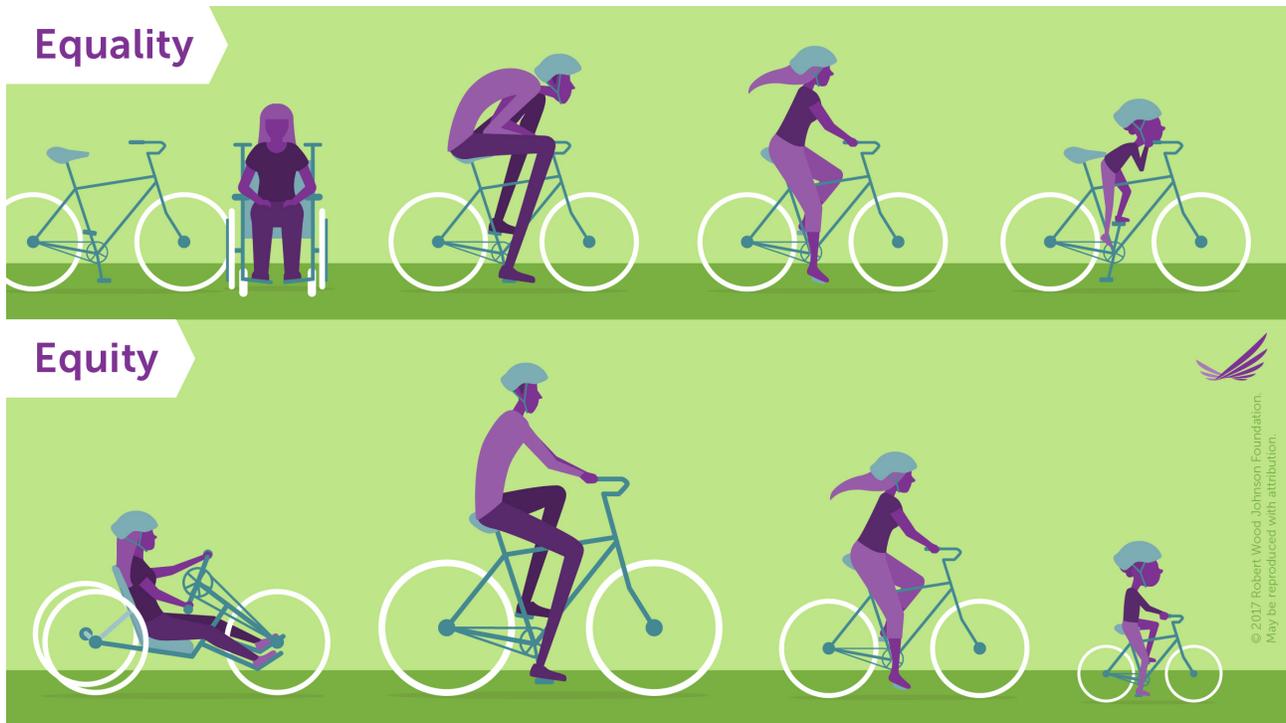


Figure 6: Infographic demonstrating the difference between equality (everyone gets the same bicycle no matter their size or ability) and equity (everyone gets a human-powered cycle that best fits their size and ability).

Source : *Visualizing Health Equity: One Size Does Not Fit All Infographic*, June 2017, accessed May 7, 2021

### 2.3 Why is Mobility Justice / Equity necessary?

So why is this so important for transportation planners specifically to address? Because access to transportation is how each of us is able to access basic human services and fulfill our needs, and therefore issues of individual transportation needs cut across all other sectors.<sup>64</sup> Understanding a community’s transportation needs has the potential to tie into global issues like climate change,<sup>65</sup> as well as individuals’ ability to access basic medical services and enjoy quality of life. Providing good bus service, particularly bus rapid transit, has been shown to improve economic prospects all along that transit corridor.<sup>66</sup> Economic outcomes are not the only measure of success, either. Increased participation in planning processes by minoritized individuals is also a critical component of building towards MJE, and there are many ways to achieve that engagement.

If we as planners are to build the future, we must address these past harms and how they influence our present inequities. It is critical that we engage in the work of understanding the role

64 Tamika Butler, “Confronting Power and Privilege,” December 2020

65 For an exploration of the confluence of MJE and climate change, please see Mullen and Marsden, “[Mobility Justice in Low Carbon Energy Transitions](#).” This article evaluates not just access to low-carbon mobility resources but how those resources are allocated particularly from collective and equity standpoints.

66 Arthur C. Nelson and Joanna Ganning, *National Study of BRT Development Outcomes* (University of Utah and the National Institute for Transportation and Communities, December 2015)

that our profession has played in upholding racism, oppression, and white supremacy.<sup>67</sup> Without understanding this legacy, we cannot move forward in the field towards equity and justice.<sup>68</sup> This type of work necessarily involves approaching communities who have been neglected to ask what they need; to do anything else is paternalistic and perpetuates the same issues of oppression and disenfranchisement. It is clear that class, race, sexuality, gender expression, and other social constructs impact an individual's capacity for movement within their environment<sup>69</sup> and planners have the power to bring voices into the conversation that are otherwise unheard.<sup>70</sup>

Mobility justice / equity is not something that happens in a vacuum, and neither are the injustices that make it necessary. Because we are operating today in a place of structural inequality, segregation, and white supremacy that is upheld by state political power, the only alternative to perpetuating these systems is to build equally-powerful systems to counter it.<sup>71</sup> Access, transportation, and mobility are not an end goal in themselves, but a way of jump-starting efforts towards racial justice and equity by providing historically under-served communities with power and agency.<sup>72</sup>

*... if we don't talk to [BIPOC folks], ask them, and listen to them until after transportation decisions are already made, then we're just doing things exactly the way we did them before. We are trying to retrofit equity without having to confront the role our industry plays in maintaining the status quo of racism and oppression.*<sup>73</sup>

If we do not focus on understanding the immediate issues these communities are facing, we cannot begin to address roots of the problems adequately. Community members are experts in the issues in their communities, and should be consulted as such.<sup>74</sup> These issues are also not unique to the US and proposals for alternatives to address specifically the exclusion of particular communities from transportation planning is a long-studied problem.<sup>75</sup> Stories about projects that do not succeed are usually stories of a lack of connection to the local community needs. Agencies and governments that are able to work together to co-create plans that address local needs are more likely to see those projects through the planning process in a more equitable

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67 Sisk et al., [Confronting power and privilege for inclusive, equitable, and healthy communities](#)

68 Tamika Butler, "We Must Talk About Race When We Talk About Bikes," June 9, 2020

69 Louis Everuss, "'Mobility Justice': a new means to examine and influence the politics of mobility," *Applied Mobilities* 4 (February 17, 2019)

70 For an overview of literature about the consequences of the lack of equity in transit systems, see page 32 of Matthew Palm et al., "Equity Analysis and New Mobility Technologies: Toward Meaningful Interventions," *Journal of Planning Literature* 36, no. 1 (February 1, 2021)

71 For a brief introduction to these concepts, please see Mark Lopez, *Segregated By Design* (Silkworm Studios, April 5, 2019). The book the video is based on provides a fuller context : Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, May 2018)

72 Ersilia Verlinghieri and Tim Schwanen, "Transport and mobility justice: Evolving discussions," *Journal of Transport Geography* 87 (July 2020)

73 Butler, ["Confronting Power and Privilege"](#)

74 McCullough and van Stokkum, [Answers from the Margins](#), pg 7.

75 F. C Hodgson and J Turner, "Participation not consumption: the need for new participatory practices to address transport and social exclusion," *Transport Policy*, Transport and Social Exclusion, 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2003)

fashion and build trust within the community.<sup>76</sup> These types of success stories are only possible when the community feels like they have been instrumental in guiding a project, and deep community engagement processes form the core of all of the frameworks discussed in the next section for this reason.

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<sup>76</sup> McCullough and van Stokkum, *Answers from the Margins*, pg 17.

But it is not love and not even sympathy upon which Society is based in [people]. It is the conscience — be it only at the stage of an instinct — of human solidarity. It is the unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each [individual] from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to [their] own.



### 3 Strategies for Advancing Mobility Justice / Equity

The frameworks that I will be exploring are not simply recommendations for community engagement practices. As described above, any top-down process is not going to have room for community needs, and the most important aspect of integrating MJE into planning is to ensure that needs from marginalized communities are centered in planning processes. Instead of prescriptive processes, MJE oriented frameworks provide a series of recommendations, based on theories of community involvement, that can be adapted to any project or situation. I will be using one particular lens, from recommendations that are tailored for transportation, in order to evaluate the three Bay Area bus projects in the East Bay and San Francisco.

#### 3.1 Theories

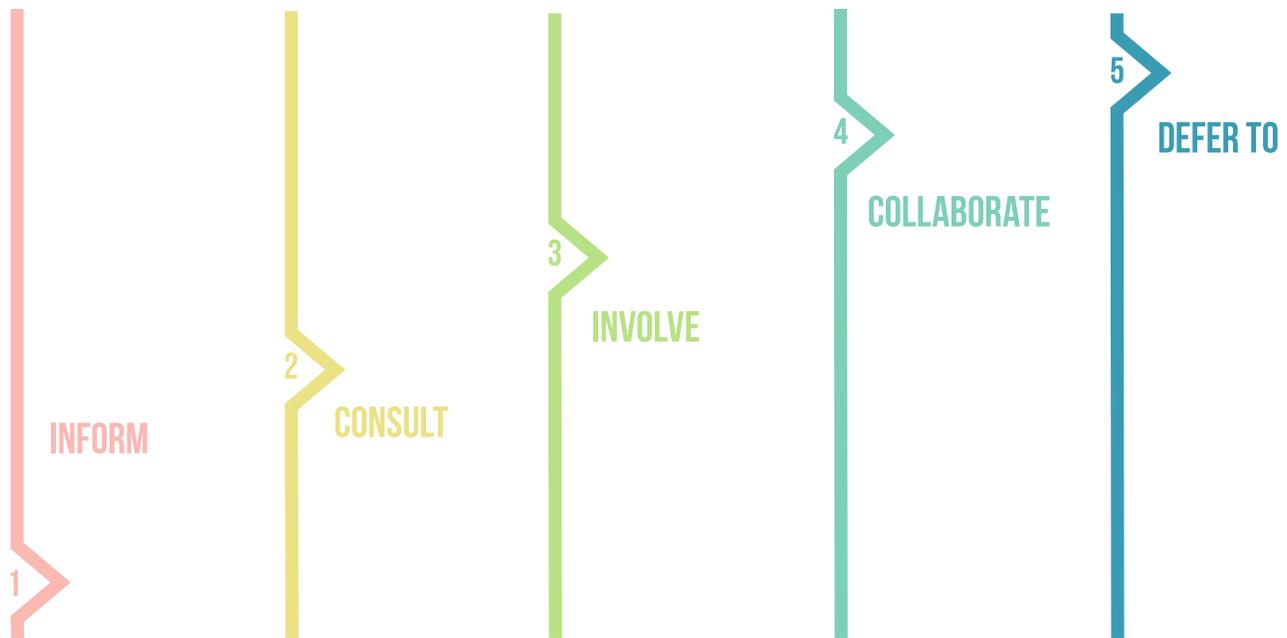


Figure 7: Five developmental stages from engagement to ownership – Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Defer To. Additional figure text is available in Appendix B on page 83.

Source : *Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership* (Facilitating Power, August 4, 2020)

Top-down planning methods in theory include options for community engagement, but they do not provide opportunities for communities to have true power in the process. In order to build systems of community power, we look to concepts of justice to guide us.<sup>77</sup> In 2020, the Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector (CESBS) Initiative of the NAACP released “a deep toolkit of explainers, principles, tips and tactics for everyone seeking to bring justice and equity to buildings and development.”<sup>78</sup> This document walks through five “developmental

Previous page : photo from [WOCinTech Chat](#) on flickr (CC BY 2.0). Quote from Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* (1902).

<sup>77</sup> Alex Karner et al., “From Transportation Equity to Transportation Justice: Within, Through, and Beyond the State,” *Journal of Planning Literature* 35, no. 4 (November 1, 2020)

<sup>78</sup> *Guidelines for Equitable Community Involvement in Building & Development Projects and Policies* (NAACP, July 26, 2021)

stages” (Figure 7 on page 19) that range from simply providing information about existing decisions to the ability for communities to make those decisions. By framing steps towards equity as developmental, this report encourages communities to understand how to continue moving forward through them to build equity and community power.<sup>79</sup> However, it can be difficult to understand how to get to the final stage without more concrete actions for ensuring that all community members are involved. MJE frameworks expand upon those ideas and provide those specific actions that ensure that historically marginalized perspectives are centered in the process.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.1.1 Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Engagement

Another important lens for examining citizen participation in planning processes is Arnstein’s 1969 “Ladder of Citizen Engagement.”<sup>81</sup> The eight rungs of her ladder move through three realms of nonparticipation, tokenism, and finally into true citizen power. The purpose of MJE work is to keep all projects in the top three rungs, to create opportunities not just for “input” from the community but true opportunities for community needs to shape priorities. Although Arnstein specifically calls out “racism and resistance to power distribution” as issues on the powerholder’s side of the conversation, she also specially states that her Ladder does not address those issues.<sup>82</sup> She is very clear that the Ladder she presents is a simplistic linear version of a much more complicated system that depends on the motives behind the powerholder’s actions, rather than just the actions themselves.<sup>83</sup>

While still very relevant in community engagement work, Arnstein’s Ladder also has its limits – namely that it is only a linear process, best for one-time use. There are no opportunities or suggestions in Arnstein’s framework for building and continuing the movement that it starts.<sup>85</sup> Encouraging consistent involvement is the only way to build longevity in these movements and ensure that planning projects, which can frequently take decades, are finished in the same spirit that they are started. Once the process has been started by a small group, it is critical that other members be brought on board in order to spread it throughout the whole community. The clearest example of the need for continuity and longevity emphasizes that any project that is designed to build community power “depends as much on the broader political context as on the strength of the ... process itself.”<sup>86</sup>

Political support is critical for any process to shift the existing (im)balance of power, since the current political powers are the ones maintaining that (im)balance. In order to also avoid

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79 *Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership* (Facilitating Power, August 4, 2020), pg 2.

80 [Make community engagement work](#)

81 Sherry R. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35, no. 4 (1969)

82 [Arnstein](#), pg. 25.

83 [Arnstein](#), pg. 26.

84 [Arnstein](#)

85 Alex Karner et al., “The View From the Top of Arnstein’s Ladder: Participatory Budgeting and the Promise of Community Control,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 85, no. 3 (July 2019): pg. 238.

86 [Karner et al.](#), pg. 237.

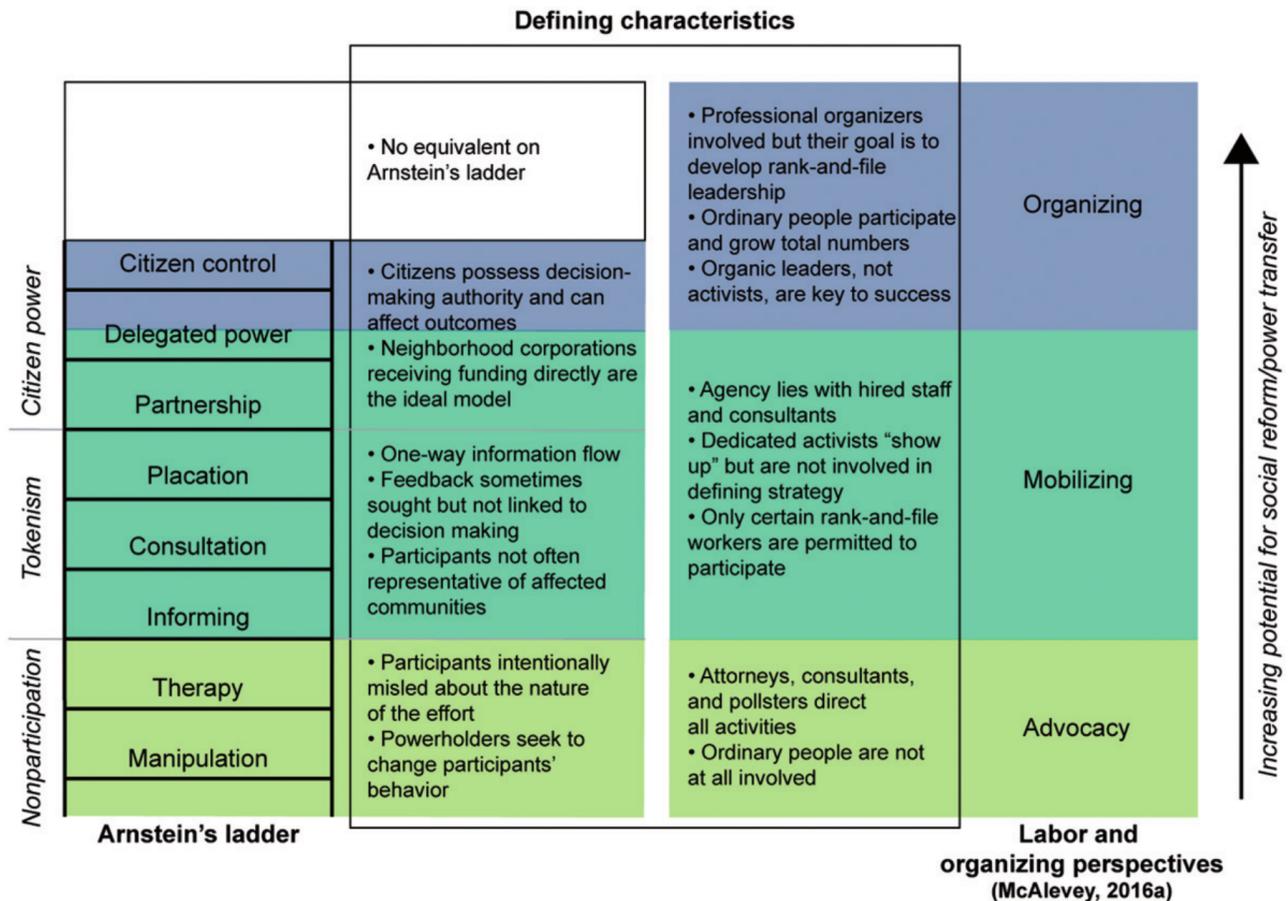


Figure 8: Expanding Arnstein's Ladder with concepts from labor and organizing, and how it can be used to build internal community support for movements. From Figure 1 of Alex Karner et al., "The View From the Top of Arnstein's Ladder: Participatory Budgeting and the Promise of Community Control," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 85, no. 3 (July 2019)

Original figure caption : Relationship between Arnstein's ladder<sup>84</sup> and contemporary perspectives on social change. Shades designate correspondence between labor and organizing perspectives on social change and rungs on Arnstein's ladder. Arnstein's categories (nonparticipation, tokenism, and citizen power) do not map directly onto McAlevey, (2016) three models. The mobilizing model, for example, encompasses elements of both partnership and delegated power. McAlevey, (2016)'s organizing model goes further than the highest rung of Arnstein's ladder in that it sets forth a broader vision for social reform and power redistribution. Note that McAlevey, (2016) use of the term advocacy differs from its common usage in the planning literature (e.g., Davidoff, "(1965)").

burnout or simply creating a new structure of political power, sustaining momentum for changes requires a step beyond Arnstein's "citizen control." Drawing on labor and organizing writings, McAlevey<sup>87</sup> proposes that extension consist of "professional organizers... develop[ing] rank-and-file leadership" and "organic leaders" rather than relying on a small group of the same individuals. These options provide a stepping stone that leads directly into the MJE frameworks – once citizens have decision-making powers, what do they do next with them?

87 Jane F. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), as referenced in Karner et al., "The View From the Top of Arnstein's Ladder," pg. 238

### 3.1.2 Psychological Ownership

The other interconnected idea here is that of psychological ownership (PO). Initially defined in an organizational management context, PO starts with the basic human desire for control in any context – objects, concepts, organizations, or other individuals – that may or may not involve formal structures of ownership.<sup>88</sup> Despite the difficulty of translating evaluation criteria for quantifying PO into other languages and cultural settings, the basics of understanding what creates a sense of ownership over a place or a process is hugely valuable to transportation planning. Working from the assumption that “[p]eople identify themselves through the things over which they feel ownership,” and that feelings of ownership stem from personal involvement and an investment of an individual’s time,<sup>89</sup> planners can understand the fundamental need for equitable citizen power and true community involvement in the development process.

Autonomy and control form the building blocks for PO; that this is available in most situations only for favored groups (white, cisgendered, heterosexual, middle- or upper-class, native English speakers, men, etc.) is the basis of white supremacy, and the only way to push back against it is to give power to others to allow them to develop PO in places where it has been historically and systematically denied. All of the MJE frameworks that I found, including those that are not explicitly written up here, are fundamentally based on the ideas of building citizen power from marginalized communities. When individuals are genuinely involved in local planning processes, they are able to exercise control over what happens in their communities, which ultimately leads to PO and feelings of broader responsibility for that community as a whole. Involvement leads to increased PO which leads to more involvement,<sup>90</sup> in a self-perpetuating cycle that builds community power. Building these self-sustaining movements within communities is the best way to create systems that are able to challenge the systemic issues of injustice and inequity. However, it can be difficult to understand how to get to the final stage without more concrete actions for ensuring that all community members are involved in planning that affect them. MJE frameworks expand upon those ideas and provide agencies, municipalities, and anyone else engaging with specific actions to help ensure that historically marginalized perspectives are centered in the planning process.

### 3.1.3 Participatory Planning

Participatory planning is another model that has been used for increasing public involvement in various aspects of planning processes. However, as discussed by Meléndez and Parker,<sup>91</sup> citizen participation in planning requires the explicit construction of a learning environment in which non-professionals are encouraged and supported in their engagement. Framing such spaces as learning environments brings in the social aspect of these interactions, and can help

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88 Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks, [“Toward a Theory of Psychological Ownership in Organizations”](#) as summarized in Helen Campbell Pickford, Genevieve Joy, and Kate Roll, “Psychological Ownership: Effects and Applications,” *Mutuality in Business research team Briefing Number 2* (October 20, 2016): pg. 3

89 Pickford, Joy, and Roll, pg. 3.

90 Pickford, Joy, and Roll, pg. 4.

91 Meléndez and Parker, [“Learning in Participatory Planning Processes”](#)

planners and event facilitators hone in on the type of processes that would most effectively engage a particular group. This level of intentionality that planners need to create spaces for the public also engages learning-sciences frameworks that can help guide that creation into something that is more inclusive, particularly for marginalized groups. Even if these principles are employed for a single engagement activity, it is likely that the effort will be noticed and a chance to be heard authentically will be appreciated by the community members who attend. In turn this demonstration of trust in the community hopefully leads to more effective participation in the future as well.

In the same way that land use designers and planners use space to shape the behavior and activities of the people in a particular space, so too can these participatory planning and learning environments create inclusive and authentic opportunities for community feedback and engagement. The decisions made around land use planning impact the lives of community members in very tangible ways, therefore it is crucial to ensure that marginalized community members have the ability to fully participate in these processes. Decision-makers need to understand and be held accountable for the way they design engagement activities – from who is invited to where they are held to the style of interactions they expect from attendees. If marginalized community members are explicitly welcomed and included they are more likely to continue engaging, thus building a more just and equitable planning process. “Urban planners have extensively studied public participation and associated barriers... However, far less emphasis has been placed on how the design of participatory processes itself can impact differentiated learning, inclusion and participation...”<sup>92</sup> Land use planning shapes transit needs by shaping physical space, so adopting similar tools into the transit planning toolkit will help both planners and communities better understand how to make just and equitable decisions going forward.

Both participatory planning and PO feed into each other at the top of the Ladder, showing ways that increased community engagement can be self-sustaining from within as well as advance MJE in planning processes. By integrating ideas from the long-running labor organizing movement, we planners can help communities create sustainable movements needed to counter systemic injustices and inequities. But this is still all theoretical – frameworks provide practical, tangible steps for agencies and municipalities to take.

## 3.2 Frameworks

TransitCenter, the Untokening, and Greenlining set out clear steps that we can lean on to build these new processes. For communities to reclaim power in the planning process, everything must begin with a Community Needs Assessment (Figure 9 on page 24) or other process that allows the community themselves to determine the focus and goals of a project – not top-down planning but a true understanding of what problems the community is facing and the solutions they want to those problems. This method can be scary for planners, because it introduces uncertainty and chaos into the process. Planning is a field built on administrative control

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<sup>92</sup> Meléndez and Parker, “[Learning in Participatory Planning Processes](#),” 142.

of lines and squares, but life – particularly human life – does not work that way.<sup>93</sup> Through the methods and principles outlined in each of these three frameworks, in combination with concepts like psychological ownership (PO) and the Ladder of Citizen Participation, we planners can help communities co-create new processes that actually address their needs rather than impose top-down solutions.

The Greenlining Institute lays out very clearly that their *Mobility Equity Framework* is a handbook for “how to make transportation work for people.”<sup>94</sup> Identifying the mobility needs of low income communities of color through an emphasis on social equity and building community power forms the basis of Greenlining’s pyramid. But this is only Step 1 in this framework. Step 2 involve 12 specific Mobility Equity Indicators for quantitative comparisons of transit plans. By providing the former, Greenlining is helping low income communities of color the same type of tools that are currently being used by professional planners to make decisions, thereby arming them with the type of information needed to present their case within the current paradigm. In order to have power over these decisions, Step 3 introduces strategies to integrate communities in the decisionmaking processes that ultimately control funding for transit projects. Despite the clear breakdown of the Indicators there is much less specificity about how to ensure that community members’ lived experiences are considered on equal footing with numerical data, unlike the Untokening.

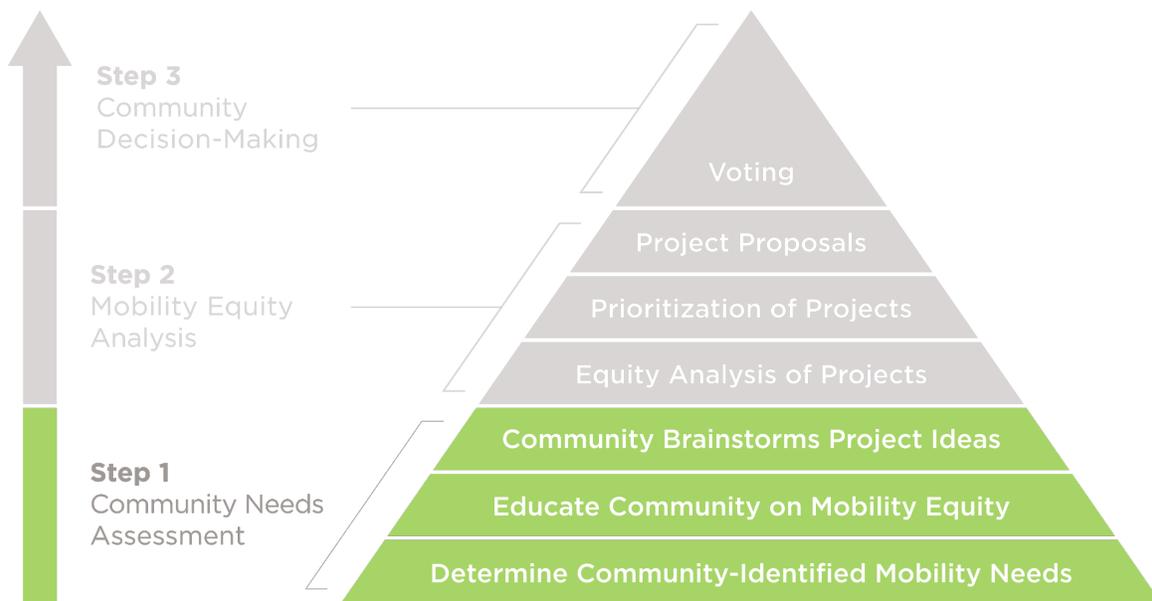


Figure 9: description for accessibility  
 Source : *Mobility Equity Framework* (Oakland: Greenlining Institute, 2018)

Untokening’s *Principles of Mobility Justice* provides ten Principles aimed at activists and others who may not be part of formal planning spaces. These Principles are then broken down into Problem, Principle, and Practice which outline recommendations for understanding barriers to

93 For a thorough exploration of these concepts, please see Scott, *Seeing Like a State*

94 *Mobility Equity Framework*

mobility in marginalized communities and envisioning new solutions, a basing solutions on that new vision of mobility justice, and ways that advocates can help work towards that new vision within “white-centered planning spaces” (i.e. professional planning spaces). These clearly-articulated goals for mobility justice with their clearly stated Problem, Principle, and Practice are however much more focused on the ultimate dismantling of larger systemic issues that can be difficult to understand how to tackle in an individual project. It is important for both planners and communities to ensure that all of their work is striving towards these goals, but also to understand that they may be too big to solve in one project. Having these conversations within and with communities can help transit agencies target projects better, but in this document Untokening does not provide a clear framework for moving those projects forward.

TransitCenter’s *Equity in Practice* guidebook<sup>95</sup> is written for transit and public agencies, providing examples from across the US of equity statements that are baked into agency procedures, other ways that agencies are incorporating MJE best practices into their projects, and a review of emerging tools for measuring equity. Transit Center also takes a deep dive into lessons learned, and the lack of support for MJE in Federal Title VI regulations. Throughout the report, TransitCenter references specific local case studies and emphasizes the positive outcomes for communities and agencies of incorporating MJE into transit planning.

Each of the documents provides steps for working through MJE concepts in the context of a particular project that can be adapted to each unique local situation. However, they all return to the same basic concept of returning decision-making power to the communities who are most dependent on the outcomes of transit planning decisions. This means stepping up community engagement to move beyond simply asking for feedback on existing plans and into a space of true engagement with the whole of the planning process, beginning with asking about the most pressing issues rather than making top-down administrative decisions. Transit Center emphasizes the need for communities to have opportunities to give meaningful input on projects not to just tick a requirement box.

### 3.3 Five Pillars

TransitCenter’s Five Pillars provide a concise summary of the concepts that are expressed by both Greenlining and the Untokening. The specific actions associated with each pillar helps clarify how planners, agencies, and even community members can engage with the concept and move towards MJE through PO and labor organizing principles. Because of this specificity of these items, I will be using these Five Pillars as the main lens to investigate MJE in BRT projects to show how they can be used to address past injustice and move transit projects forward equitably.

- **Pillar 1: Articulate a vision of an equitable transportation system and explain why resources must be prioritized to benefit people who have been marginalized.**

*Acknowledge that specific groups of people have been historically and are currently marginal-*

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95 [“Equity in Practice : A guidebook for transit agencies”](#)

ized, assert that transportation policy should seek to end this marginalization, and provide a positive vision of equitable access.

- **Pillar 2: Connect transportation to other aspects of people's lives, recognizing that transportation exist within broader inequities.**

*Situate marginalization from transportation resources within a larger understanding of systemic inequity. Identify how transportation interacts with other systems (e.g., policing, housing, education, politics, public health) to multiply inequitable outcomes and account for those interactions in policy and processes.*

- **Pillar 3: Acknowledge past transportation decisions that have deepened inequity.**

*Agencies must acknowledge their own actions that may have bred distrust and marginalization of riders.*

- **Pillar 4: Measure equitable outcomes for people and the neighborhoods where they live and work.**

*Track outcomes of the transportation system for people who depend on transit and people facing marginalization wherever they live in the region as well as for neighborhoods with a high concentration of residents who depend on transit or who face marginalization.*

- **Pillar 5: Create processes for the people most affected by agency actions to express their interests and exert meaningful influence over agency decisions.**

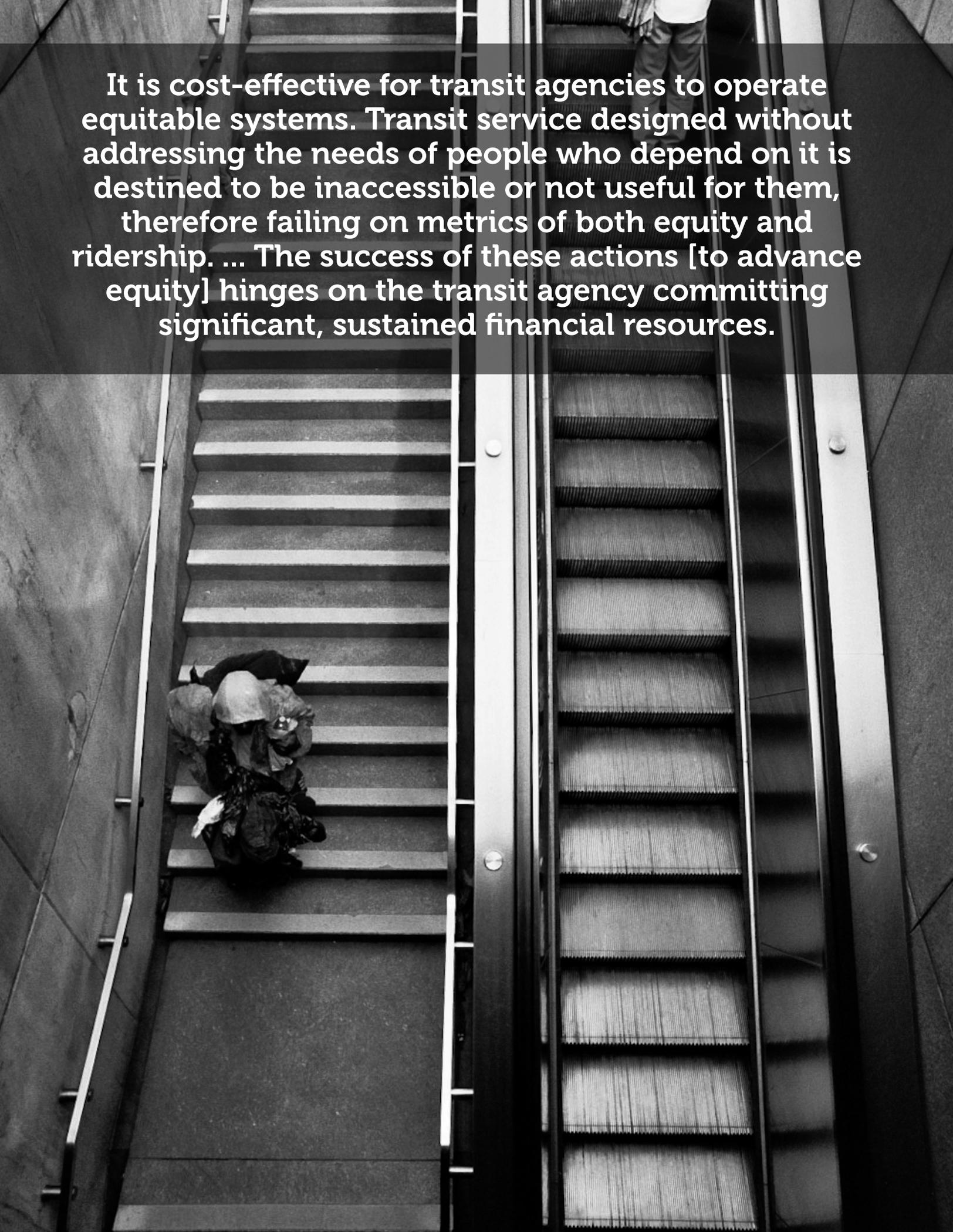
*Advancing equity requires shifting some decision-making power to the people who will be affected. Public transit riders should have opportunities to influence transit agency decisions, transparency from the agency about why choices are made, and venues to hold decision-makers accountable.<sup>96</sup>*

These Five Pillars form the foundation of the analysis I will be applying to the outreach activities around the Tempo, Geary, and Van Ness BRT projects. Having a unified approach creates a structure for cross comparison between the projects, which in turn will show how critical this MJE approach is to building true community participation in similar planning projects. It also helps provide a concrete way of applying abstract projects to past planning actions in the hope of motivating myself and other planners to use them in the moment when we have the opportunity and demonstrates methods for incorporating MJE into future planning projects.

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96 "Equity in Practice : A guidebook for transit agencies," 12-22.

**It is cost-effective for transit agencies to operate equitable systems. Transit service designed without addressing the needs of people who depend on it is destined to be inaccessible or not useful for them, therefore failing on metrics of both equity and ridership. ... The success of these actions [to advance equity] hinges on the transit agency committing significant, sustained financial resources.**



## 4 Motivation

Having built an understanding of MJE methods in planning, I am now turning my attention to three specific projects in the Bay Area – the East Bay 1 Tempo BRT; and the Van Ness Avenue and Geary Boulevard Improvement Projects in San Francisco. Have Transit Center’s Five Pillars been applied in these three projects? And what lessons can be learned from these planning projects that translate to future projects? While this report is structured as a post-implementation analysis, my hope is that by understanding both community and professional planner perspectives on projects it can serve as a guide for structuring future outreach efforts. Using the MJE frameworks, past processes can be analyzed for opportunities to act with cultural sensitivity in the future.

*Transportation equity is a crucial part of a broader concern with transport and mobility justice. Transport justice encompasses moral and political concerns related to equity, democracy, and diversity in the pursuit of more just cities and mobility systems. The concern with equity (distributive justice) relates to how the institutions and rules that govern society shape social and economic inequalities among its members. It focuses on the evaluative standards used to judge the outcomes of policies, asking who benefits from and is burdened by them and to what extent.<sup>97</sup>*

To bring the focus specifically to the Bay Area, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) have developed an “[Equity Platform](#)” that has guided their work in the [Plan Bay Area 2050](#) work done recently. Based on a continuous feedback loop that begins with listening to community expertise, the ABAG-MTC Equity Platform also acknowledges that development of equity is going to require work across disciplines and identities. The platform also explicitly states that this is something that must be “nurtured and grown” rather than a one-and-done solution.<sup>98</sup> Recognizing the ongoing and cyclical nature of equity work is also a key component of actually doing it, and my aim here is to also introduce some ideas of how to make that work self-sustaining within the communities themselves.<sup>99</sup> As the groups overseeing many of the major transit projects in the wider Bay Area, it is good to see that this Equity Platform exists as a core document and ethic in their work moving forward.

To better understand the planning and outreach activities around the International Blvd, Van Ness Ave, and Geary Ave projects, I interviewed municipal and outside agency planners as well as community members who had been involved with the projects. The insights from these conversations gave me more context to apply the Five Pillars to this work. One thing that was clear from all of my conversations is that everyone I spoke with felt that community engagement was a crucial part of the projects. Opinions differed on whether what had been done was enough, or

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Previous page : photo from [Brandon Doran](#) on flickr (CC BY-ND-NC 2.0). Quote from “[Equity in Practice : A guidebook for transit agencies.](#)”

97 Pereira and Karner, “[Transportation Equity](#)”

98 *Equity Priority Communities | Association of Bay Area Governments*, May 2021, accessed February 24, 2022

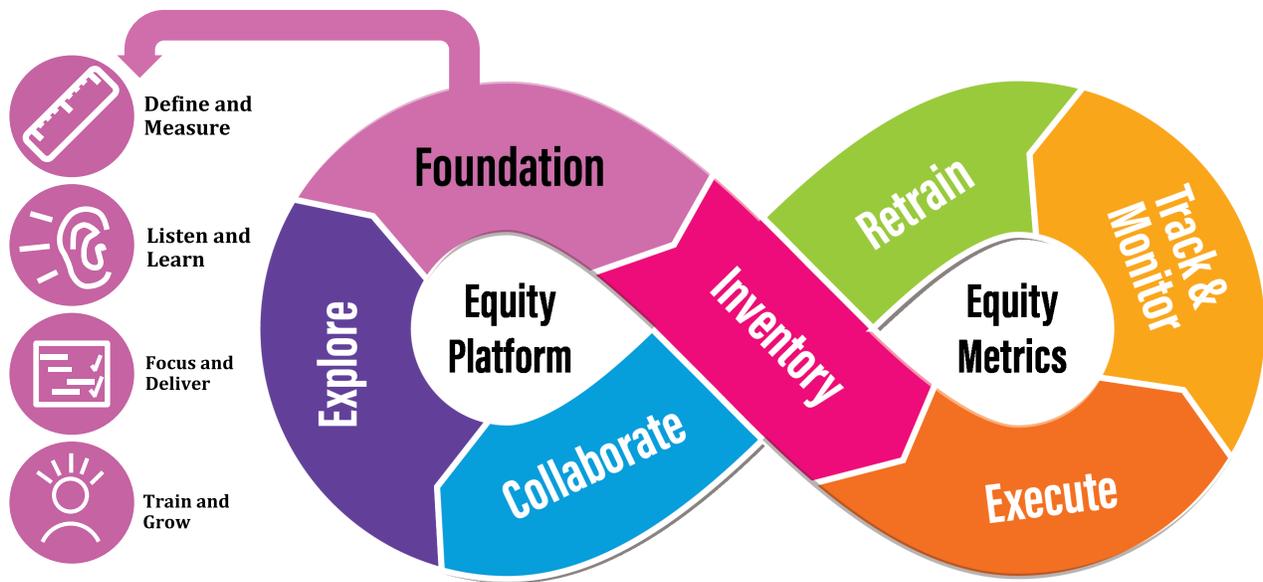


Figure 10: Diagram of the ABAG-MTC Equity Platform and how it interacts with their Equity Metrics. This iterative and ongoing process is the type of cycle that can lead to MJE in planning processes. Source : *ABAG-MTC Equity Platform*, accessed February 24, 2022

had been accessible to all affected members of the community, but it was clear that even planners who were on the receiving end of community complaints felt that it was an important and worthwhile process. I structured my interview questions around each of the Five Pillars and was gratified to get candid responses even from folks who are actively involved in the Van Ness and Geary projects. It speaks to a level of understanding and commitment to ideas of MJE that everyone I spoke with was open about the failings and missed opportunities they encountered.

The 1 Tempo route generated a lot of negative press and community feedback<sup>100</sup> as did the projects along Geary Boulevard<sup>101</sup> and Van Ness Avenue.<sup>102</sup> All three had similar pushback from businesses and drivers concerned about losing travel lanes and parking, and struggled with input from actual bus riders. The potential for positive impact on poor traffic flow and slow existing service that BRT offers is huge.<sup>103</sup> However, in order to advance MJE it is important to not replicate the same issues that other transit projects have encountered, particularly decades-long bureaucracy, by ensuring that communities are involved in the very first stages of planning in a way that gives them power to shape the project. Understanding the pain points in the past can provide helpful insights to inform a more positive outcome in the next round, as well as estab-

100 Riya Bhattacharjee, "Berkeley Residents Strongly Oppose BRT at Council Hearing," *The Berkeley Daily Planet* (Berkeley, CA), April 21, 2010 and Erin Baldassari, "Oakland, San Leandro: Some fear 'transformative' rapid transit system coming to storied thoroughfare," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 17, 2016

101 *Options for Geary BRT Come Into Focus*, June 2012, accessed May 7, 2022 and Adam Brinklow, "Richmond Residents Sue City to Slow Geary Bus Project," *Curbed SF*, February 2017, accessed May 7, 2022

102 *Four Years Into Van Ness Bus Lane Project, Red Concrete Gets Poured for Lanes*, November 2020, accessed November 28, 2021

103 Transportation Research Board, National Cooperative Highway Research Program, and Transportation Research Board, *Cost/Benefit Analysis of Converting a Lane for Bus Rapid Transit—Phase II Evaluation and Methodology* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, April 2011)

lish community trust by demonstrating that agencies and municipalities are willing to learn from past mistakes.

I hope that this report will provide more background about the importance of MJE work in planning, particularly in issues of bus planning, and how to translate such abstract concepts into concrete planning actions. While the frameworks that I have reviewed here and others that are being developed will help solidify these steps, it is also critical that planners and everyone involved in decision-making understand the background in order to avoid taking only symbolic or performative actions. A crucial part of MJE is to acknowledge the harms done in the past, including through the meta-work of the process; we cannot undo what has been done but we as planners can acknowledge our part in it and work to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

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103 Although I hope that the power to make these decisions will ultimately be in the hands of community members, it is also important to note that these communities are generally already overburdened and expecting this capacity to be developed overnight is both ludicrous and performative. These will necessarily be long, slow conversations that will require external support and financing but need to be done with the ultimate goal of providing that support to someone from within the community rather than an external person.

Access via rapid transit is especially important, since rapid transit is the most efficient way to transport large numbers of people around a metropolitan area. Furthermore, in addition to increasing congestion and traffic injuries and deaths, automobile-based mobility has been a leading contributor to climate change and pollution, all of which threaten the health and prosperity of city residents around the world. It is critical for cities to enable access for residents that avoids use of single-occupancy vehicles.



## 5 Introduction to Bus Rapid Transit

Bus rapid transit (BRT) is excellent for both occasional riders and regular commuters – it can provide service at speeds comparable to driving alone, and most of the infrastructure already exists or is comparatively simple to deploy. Although commuters provide the ongoing support for a transit agency, capturing those who are willing to forego a car trip on occasion is how agencies can attract more regular riders. By providing more frequent and reliable transit options agencies may be able to reverse pandemic-induced trends of low ridership.<sup>104</sup> Improved bus service has been shown time and again to be the most reliable way to boost ridership numbers.<sup>105</sup>

With BRT relatively easy to deploy, transit agencies may be able to use BRT to highlight advantages to using transit and increase ridership. Most of the infrastructure for it is already in place – roads, stops, parking lots, service centers, etc – in a city with existing bus service. The additional elements to improve standard service can be deployed quickly and cheaply by building wooden bus bulbs

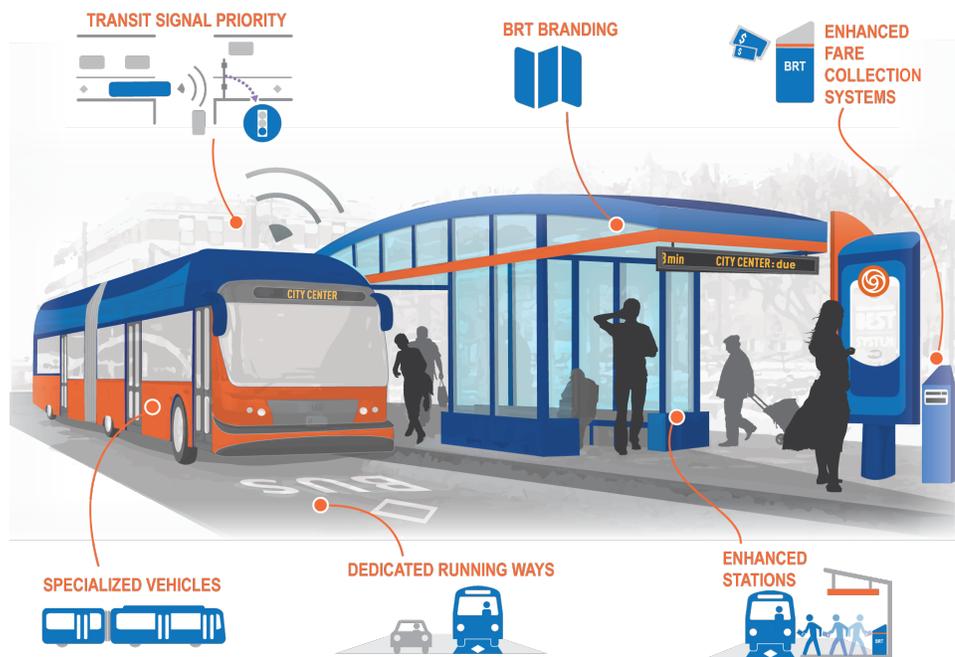


Figure 11: Six of the basic elements of a BRT system. Level boarding (no steps between the platform and the bus floor) is not shown. For a more technical definition of BRT elements, please see “What is BRT?”

Source : [Bus Rapid Transit](#)

and painting dedicated transit lanes, which has been done in several cities in the Bay Area cities’ Quick Build programs during the pandemic. Similar to the transit lanes along Geary Boulevard

Previous page : Image from SFCTA, *Geary Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Animation*, January 2014, accessed May 9, 2022. Quote from Michael Marks, *People Near Transit: Improving Accessibility and Rapid Transit Coverage in Large Cities* (ITDP, October 2016).

104 Michael Manville, Brian D Taylor, and Evelyn Blumenberg, *Falling Transit Ridership: California and Southern California* (UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies and SCAG, January 2018)

105 Klaus Philipson, *Ten Ways to Improve Bus Transit Use and Experience*, May 2015, accessed April 30, 2021, Steven Higashide and Mary Buchanan, *Who’s on Board 2019: How to Win Back America’s Transit Riders*, technical report (New York: TransitCenter, February 2019), accessed May 6, 2022, and Simon Tan, *How to Grow Transit Ridership*, December 2021, accessed May 6, 2022

in San Francisco<sup>106</sup> and the pedestrianization of Times Square in New York City,<sup>107</sup> these simple changes can easily become permanent fixtures. Rather than a large capital investment project like light rail, cities and agencies can deploy simple fixes to existing bus systems to improve service on short time scales. These short-term fixes should not be a substitute for longer-term investment, however. Because BRT involves other infrastructure upgrades, like payment and transit signal systems, (Figure 11 on page 32) it is natural that these implementations will take longer than painting dedicated lanes. The different timescales of the projects can work hand-in-hand to provide immediate solutions to transit woes while also putting in motion plans for future enhancements.

BRT has overtaken light rail in construction popularity around the world; 2016 was the fifth year in a row that more miles of BRT lanes were opened than light rail<sup>108</sup> and that trend showed no sign of diminishing going into 2020. This popularity is likely due to BRT's low barrier to entry. Most of the infrastructure for a bus system already exists – roads, depots, buses, and lane paint are known quantities for purchase, implementation, and maintenance; extending an existing type of system is going to be easier and cheaper than building something new. Although rail projects generate a lot of excitement and futuristic designs, BRT has the advantage of being more flexible (in terms of both routes and implementation) while delivering a similar level of service and environmental benefits.<sup>109</sup> Many examples of these systems exist all over the world, from the RIT that began service in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1973 to TransMilenio in Bogotá, Columbia, in 2000 to Ahmedabad, India's, Janmarg system that opened in 2009. Of the 13 systems surveyed for their transformative approach to existing bus service in their cities, the average cost was only \$4 million.<sup>110</sup> This low cost of construction helps keep fares low, which in turn makes using the new BRT more attractive to individuals.

A major benefit of using BRT instead of light rail, aside from cost, is the ability to re-route buses around immobile traffic jams or other road blocks, thereby increasing the quality and timeliness of the service.<sup>111</sup> Pre-pandemic traffic in the Bay Area was a major factor in bus travel times and it is quickly returning,<sup>112</sup> so having this type of route flexibility seems prudent in all new systems. All of this has been complicated by the current use of individual vehicles as a protection against COVID-19. Mass transit solutions moving forward will now need to include ventilation and sanitizing plans, as well as a whole new style of messaging about safety, to re-attract former riders. Any COVID-19 safety features being implemented on local bus service should also translate conveniently to BRT. The relative affordability of BRT implementation allows it to also be an

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106 *Geary Boulevard Improvement Project*, Online, December 2017, accessed October 28, 2021

107 Janette Sadik-Khan and Seth Solomonow, *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution* (2017)

108 "Rapid Transit Trends Show Record Growth in 2016, with Huge Increases in China, Brazil," ITDP, February 17, 2017

109 Taotao Deng and John D. Nelson, "Recent Developments in Bus Rapid Transit: A Review of the Literature," *Transport Reviews* 31, no. 1 (2011)

110 As calculated in 2010, in Dario Hidalgo and Aileen Carrigan, "Modernizing Public Transportation," October 2010, accessed March 16, 2020. This article is also an excellent review of 13 BRT systems around the world.

111 Deng and Nelson, "Recent Developments in Bus Rapid Transit: A Review of the Literature"

112 Ricardo Cano and Nami Sumida, *Traffic Congestion Is Making a Comeback in the Bay Area, but in a Strange New Way*, August 2021, chap. San Francisco, accessed May 6, 2022

effective economic development tool for municipalities and regions that are able to deploy it in a way that is sensitive to local needs. A 2015 report looking at BRT systems across the US concluded that they are “associated with positive development and job location outcomes” in most cases when they maximize accessibility, minimize barriers, and take good advantage of available partnerships (among other factors). With these broad-reaching opportunities and options, BRT has the potential to provide better outcomes than alternative systems.<sup>113</sup>

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113 Nelson and Ganning, *National Study of BRT Development Outcomes*

I believe in the word community - common unity.  
Every institution (businesses, homes, schools, churches) is part of the fabric of the community.  
What we call home is not just a physical structure, it's everything around us. ...

I feel safe going to a place I'm familiar with.  
If I'm required to go somewhere else because a business went out of business or because it's hard to access a businesses due to construction or lack of parking spaces, now I have to go to an unfamiliar territory, an unfamiliar part of Oakland.



## 6 AC Transit's 1 Tempo BRT in Oakland

Telegraph Avenue and International Boulevard have long been busy bus routes with many changes. The 82, which ran the length of International Boulevard, and the 40, which ran along Telegraph Avenue, were merged into the 1 and 1R in 2007.<sup>114</sup> Based on ridership data and crowding issues on the existing routes serving that corridor, which amounted to nearly 20% of the AC Transit's total ridership,<sup>115</sup> bus stop locations were shuffled around. However, this decision was made with very little community input, particularly the more widely spaced 1R stops.<sup>116</sup> By 2013, the combined 1 and 1R routes along Telegraph Avenue and International Boulevard were seeing an average daily ridership of over 20,000 people – double the number for the next busiest lines. Alone, the 1R was still the number one line in ridership numbers but the on-time performance was stuck under 60% due to inescapable traffic congestion.<sup>117</sup> These findings solidified the need for BRT along this corridor, which was officially approved by the AC Transit board in 2001.<sup>118</sup>



Figure 12: Tempo bus promotional banner photo of the fancy buses.  
Source : "Tempo," accessed March 21, 2020

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Previous page : photo from Rachel Swan, *Oakland's Rapid Transit Buses Delayed – Again*, November 2019, chap. Bay Area & State, accessed May 10, 2022. Quote from John Jones III, third generation East Oakland resident and community organizer, in Lin et al., *East Oakland Impacts from BRT Summary*.

114 Cambridge Systematics, Inc., *AC Transit Berkeley/Oakland/San Leandro Corridor MIS*, technical report (Oakland: AC Transit, September 2002), pg 8, accessed April 27, 2022.

115 [Cambridge Systematics, Inc.](#), pg 3.

116 Joël Ramos (Former Regional Planning Director, TransForm), interview with the author, March 10, 2022.

117 WSP and Parsons Brinckerhoff, *Major Corridors Study Final Report*, technical report (AC Transit, August 24, 2016)

118 "Telegraph Ave. – International Blvd. route alignment chosen for East Bay's initial Bus Rapid Transit project," AC Transit [Press Release], August 3, 2001



W. Juana Ave

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TEMPO  
AC TRANSIT

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## 6.1 Project Summary

Originally intended to stretch nearly 20 miles from Berkeley to Bayfair BART, AC Transit’s 1 Tempo line (originally called East Bay BRT or EBBRT) opened in early August 2020 as the first true BRT line in the East Bay. The line runs 9.5 miles from Oakland’s Uptown Transit Center at 20th and Broadway to the San Leandro Transit Center at the San Leandro BART Station. This was due to opposition by residents in Berkeley and San Leandro, mostly over preserving parking and vehicle travel lanes,<sup>119</sup> but also due to lack of coordination with agencies doing other much-needed street improvement projects along the same streets.<sup>120</sup> The route had originally been the 82, until the agency made the decision to consolidate it into the 1. Eventually, crowding on that line got so bad that they introduced the 1 Rapid (1R), an express service with shorter headways and fewer stops. However, the decision about stop placement was made without community consultation and created distrust in the community around changes to their local bus service. Changes in bus service and ridership due to COVID-19 are also affecting Tempo and all of AC Transit – the loss of farebox revenues has dramatically reduced funding across California and is endangering projects.<sup>121</sup> Tempo seems to be holding its own, though, and provides service along what continues to be AC Transit’s busiest corridor.<sup>122</sup>

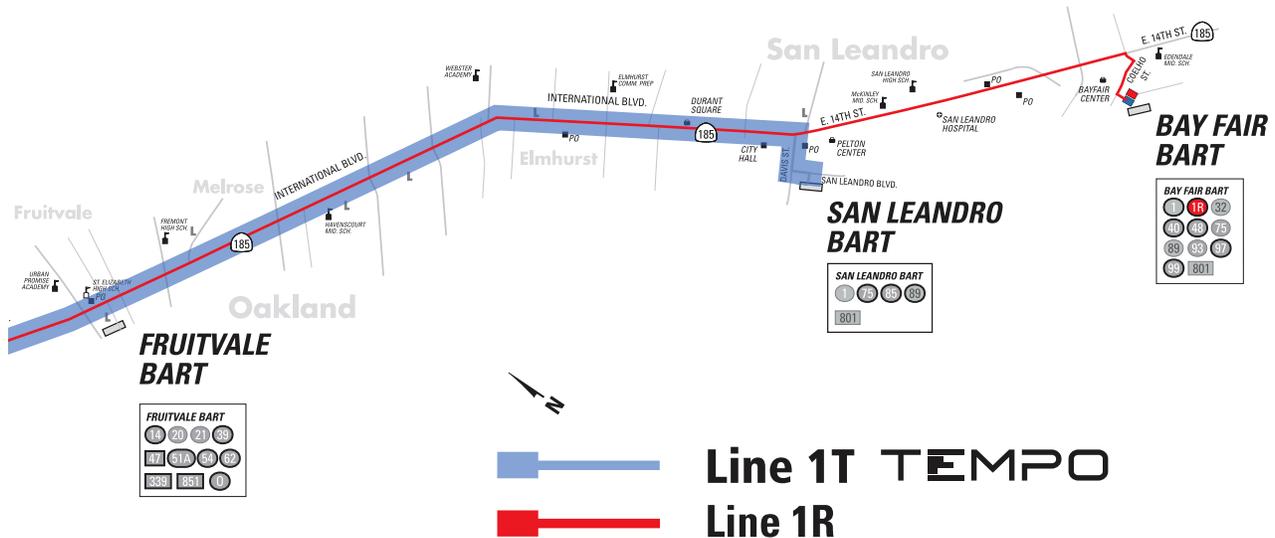


Figure 13: Southern end of a map of 1R and Tempo routes overlaid. Adapted from AC Transit, simplified and combined by the author. Full, larger version available in Appendix B on page 84.

Source : “Maps & Schedules,” accessed April 21, 2022

Previous page : photo from @rideact, “Tempo Line 1T Starts from San Leandro on East 14th Street in San Leandro and Travels along the 9.5 Mile Corridor through the Vibrant...”, November 2021, accessed May 10, 2022.

119 Michael Cabanatuan and Rachel Swan, “East Bay’s new bus rapid transit line to bring a new Tempo to East Oakland,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 8, 2020

120 City of San Leandro, “RE: Comments on East Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report, May 2007,” City Council Minute Orders [Staff Report], July 2, 2007

121 Frank Jimenez, *Impact of COVID-19 on State Transportation Revenues* (California Legislative Analyst’s Office, September 17, 2020)

122 Michael Eshleman (Service Planning Manager, AC Transit), interview with the author, October 17, 2020.

The initial proposal for the EBBRT had a cost of \$152 to \$172 million (40% of a comparable light rail system) and an opening date in 2016.<sup>123</sup> Over 40,000 passengers daily were riding the 1 and 1R bus lines in the International Blvd corridor, which was also choked with other traffic. The projection of attracting another 20,000 riders per day would require enticing people out of their cars to create freer-flowing traffic and reduce environmental impacts on the neighborhoods along and near the corridor.<sup>124</sup> By 2010, AC Transit's BRT plan for International Blvd had secured \$15 million from the Federal Department of Transportation under the *New Starts and Small Starts Program*.<sup>125</sup> The Final Environmental Impact Statement / Report (FEIS/R) was released to the public in early 2012<sup>126</sup> and generated lots of comments and feedback. Although the next version of the plan had the system opening in 2017 for \$153 million, this averaged to \$25 million per mile – not something that would win many over quickly.<sup>127</sup> Even as AC Transit's Board of Directors was putting their final stamp of approval on the BRT in early 2012,<sup>128</sup> opposition in Berkeley was heated. When construction finally began in late 2016, Berkeley was out of the picture and the opening date had slipped to 2018.<sup>129</sup>

## 6.2 Community Feedback

Using existing channels for community input on projects at the time, most of the opposition to the Tempo project came during public meetings and in published articles. My interviews with stakeholders from the community, third party agencies, and AC Transit staff emphasized the fact that this project was conducted before MJE had become a core aspect of planning and outreach. Much of the push-back from communities was based around changes to parking availability; both International Blvd and Telegraph Ave are major commercial corridors surrounded by residential areas. Due to differing local politics, these pushes in Berkeley and Oakland had opposite results. San Leandro did not mount the same level of opposition, and little alteration to the southern end of the route was made. However, this may also have been due to the lack of emphasis on MJE in the planning process for the 1 Tempo. Many community's concerns seem to have been swept under the rug in favor of politics or optics.

Another common thread in feedback was the length of time the project took, at all of its stages but particularly in construction. Not only were business owners along the corridor upset when construction dragged on at their doorsteps, but drivers and community members frequently voiced complaints about disruption to traffic and daily life. One hidden aspect of long project timelines is the community that initially gives feedback may no longer be present by the time a project reaches the construction phase. In order to achieve MJE goals, it is crucial to make adjustments to planning processes that allow for quicker solutions for the folks who give

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123 Roger Rudick, "Oakland BRT Line Opens," *StreetsBlogSF*, August 7, 2020

124 "[Telegraph Ave. – International Blvd. route alignment chosen for East Bay's initial Bus Rapid Transit project](#)"

125 "\$15 Million for Bus Rapid Transit Project," AC Transit [Press Release], February 1, 2010

126 *Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environmental Impact Report* (AC Transit, January 2012)

127 "The East Bay's First Bus Rapid Transit Line Is Coming," AC Transit [Press Release], March 28, 2016

128 "A Go-Ahead For Bus Rapid Transit," April 30, 2012

129 Ryan Levi, "AC Transit Breaks Ground on East Bay's First Bus Rapid Transit Line," *KQED* (San Francisco, CA), August 26, 2016

feedback. Otherwise, the feedback is out of date because it no longer represents the affected community and the process must be restarted.

The first public hearing about BRT in Berkeley was held on April 9, 2008,<sup>130</sup> seven years after project planning had begun. Only seven speakers were unequivocally in support of the BRT project coming down Telegraph Avenue. Much of the concern was focused on the removal of on-street parking to create a dedicated bus lane. Some discussed the impact on parking availability in adjacent neighborhoods while others voiced concern for accessing businesses along the busy commercial street.<sup>131</sup> Discussions continued for several more years and, under CEQA, citizens were able to challenge this whole project based on a claim of un-mitigated negative effect on the amount of available parking. Alternatives, including not building the project at all, had to be considered. Two years after the first public meeting, Berkeley put forth their Locally Preferred Alternative in April of 2010<sup>132</sup> – this plan amounted to little more than a No-Build alternative, so Berkeley effectively withdrew from the project.

Perhaps most significant local opposition to the project in Oakland came from the Allen Temple Baptist Church community. Allen Temple is a long-established Black church in East Oakland<sup>133</sup> whose members have been increasingly displaced by rising costs of living in Oakland; these members stay connected by returning for Sunday services from far-flung parts of the Bay Area. Many of the parishioners are older, and now live in areas that are not well served by transit. In order to stay connected to their communities, these people drive in and need convenient parking. The church also provides essential community services for the neighborhood, many of which are now able to be held outdoors in the parking lot for COVID-19 safety. The loss of not just parking space along the church's frontage but also loading zones for family members to drop off elders before parking further afield would be a major impact to the church and local community.<sup>134</sup> As a community pillar, Allen Temple was able to organize opposition to the BRT plan in a way that other groups struggled to do, neatly demonstrating the importance and power of community-level organization around planning projects.

Like Allen Temple, the major opponents of this project were not regular bus riders them-

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130 *Final Minutes of Regular Planning Commission Meeting and Special Transportation Commission Meeting*, City of Berkeley, Berkeley, CA

131 Parking is one of the "protected classes" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); along with impacts to water and air quality, projects must be assessed on their impact to local parking availability. This seems counter-intuitive to the broad understanding that more parking encourages more driving, and it's widely understood that more driving has a negative environmental impact. Many developers also are able to avoid building more parking if they can prove that sufficient on-street parking is available as a mitigation. Recent efforts to find other uses for parking spaces in urban and suburban areas frequently don't include turning parking lanes into dedicated bus lanes.

For more information, see S A Rogers, "Free of Parking: Cities Have a Lot to Gain from Recycling Car-Centric Space," *99 Percent Invisible*, March 1, 2019, *San Francisco: Meeting The Smart City Challenge* (San Francisco Municipal Transit Authority, 2016), Arthur F. Coon, "Is "Parking" Really A CEQA Impact? Same As It Ever Was!," *JDSupra Blog*, June 26, 2013, and Emily Badger, "The problem with too much parking," *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2016

132 *Presentation and Discussion: Berkeley Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative*, Supplemental Agenda Material, Office of the City Manager, Berkeley, CA, April 29, 2010

133 "History of Allen Temple Baptist Church," website, accessed April 21, 2022

134 Joël Ramos (Former Regional Planning Director, TransForm), interview with the author, March 10, 2022.

selves. Although the 1 / 1R bus riders were not an organized group at the time, the TransForm team collected thousands of feedback cards which they had passed out on buses and presented to decision makers. This represented one of the few instances that bus riders were specifically targeted for feedback. In the absence of any equity metrics required for the project these were summarily ignored.<sup>135</sup> And although the opposition did not represent the community as a whole, both of the outside contractors I interviewed were unsurprised when the agency bowed to the only requests they were hearing.

The most extensive comments in San Leandro's public meetings were also dedicated to traffic/circulation and parking impacts. Issues with the former included lack of impact evaluation of increased, diverted traffic on side streets and at intersections.<sup>136</sup> The parking impacts of dedicating one travel lane for BRT also faced opposition in San Leandro, this time at the city level with a memo from the Mayor's office stating that "on-street parking spaces are vital to San Leandro merchants."<sup>137</sup> Such a strong statement from the city would seem to have been influenced by the public, who felt that "the loss of parking was more detrimental to the community than the current travel delays."<sup>138</sup> Like Berkeley's decision, this seems solely focused on maintaining status quo for those who are comfortable with it and willfully ignoring the potential benefits of a change for everyone else. This status quo is one of white supremacy and racism, rather than MJE.

Another major concern involved San Leandro's *East 14th North Area Improvement Project* and the *East 14th South Area Median Project* happening along the same stretch that AC Transit was proposing to tear up for the dedicated BRT roadway. The South Area plan, published in 2004, spends six pages discussing the implication of dedicated BRT lanes through the area and demonstrating unacceptable negative impacts they would have.<sup>139</sup> The lack of coordination from AC Transit along this stretch is surprising, considering their involvement in the 2004 plan. It seems that no mitigation was proposed by the initial Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (DEIS/R) for the disruption to these two projects under Alternatives 1 and 3, and the city was very justified in using that lack to reject those proposals.<sup>140</sup> They did accept an altered version of the plan, and the BRT route runs through part of San Leandro to the BART station.

San Leandro was also very concerned about the environmental justice impacts of the BRT project as well as impacts to businesses along International Blvd during construction. Their re-

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135 Joël Ramos (Former Regional Planning Director, TransForm), interview with the author, March 10, 2022.

136 San Leandro, "[San Leandro Comments on EBBRT DEIS/R, May 2007](#)"

This is a known issue with CEQA – evaluations only requiring study of the first quarter- to half-mile surrounding a project. When evaluating changes to traffic flow, this is woefully inadequate and does not even begin to cover the issue of traffic diverted to other streets which may be further away. 95% of urban driving trips in the US are a mile or more, so studying an area only a half-mile from a project does not fully capture the potential traffic impacts of a project. Data from National Household Travel Survey, "Popular Vehicle Trips Statistics : Distance," Federal Highway Administration [Data Visualization], 2017.

137 San Leandro, "[San Leandro Comments on EBBRT DEIS/R, May 2007](#)," 3.

138 [San Leandro](#), 3.

139 City of San Leandro [Development Strategy], "East 14th Street South Area Development Strategy : Appendices," April 2004

140 San Leandro, "[San Leandro Comments on EBBRT DEIS/R, May 2007](#)"

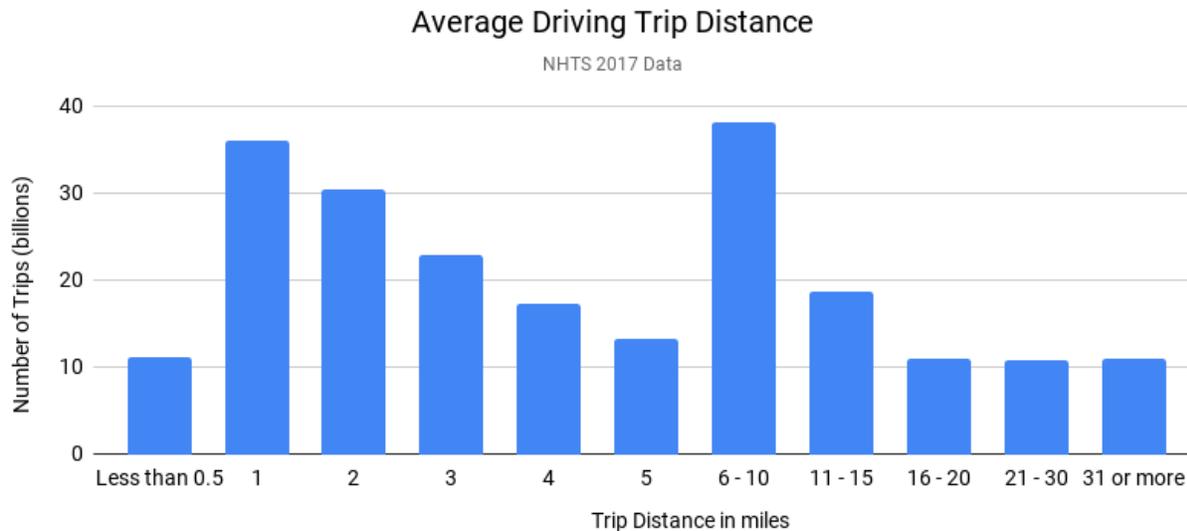


Figure 14: Chart showing that the most trips taken are at one and 6 - 10 miles, with number of trips tapering off slowly from each peak.  
 Data Source : National Household Travel Survey, "Popular Vehicle Trips Statistics : Distance," Federal Highway Administration [Data Visualization], 2017. Chart created by author.

ports emphasized that the "temporary" effects of construction to minority and low-income populations are not necessarily temporary; AC Transit's plans provided no mitigations for impacts to businesses anywhere along the corridor.<sup>141</sup> Although no specific evidence was presented in the document regarding this claim, it is clearly demonstrated repeatedly that the lack of access to generational wealth and other forms of collateral is a major barrier to minority and low-income business owners.<sup>142</sup> Considering that nearly all neighborhoods that touch International Blvd are Equity Priority Communities,<sup>143</sup> this concern from San Leandro was not un-founded.

While there was some outreach conducted to talk about the benefits of BRT along the proposed route for the EBBRT, local businesses and residents felt that the impact of construction was not adequately addressed or mitigated due to the amount of time it took. The timeline between planning, construction, and project implementation has real implications for equity. Not only do communities change in the decades that a project takes, but the disruption of construction can break communities. The fact that much of the project opposition in Berkeley came from car drivers is also concerning – that part of the project was ultimately canceled. In the interest of advancing MJE, we must ensure that privileged groups' input, even when over-represented, is not more important than feedback from affected communities like bus riders.

141 San Leandro, "[San Leandro Comments on EBBRT DEIS/R, May 2007](#)"

142 Lin et al., [East Oakland Impacts from BRT Summary](#)

143 [Equity Priority Communities | Association of Bay Area Governments](#)

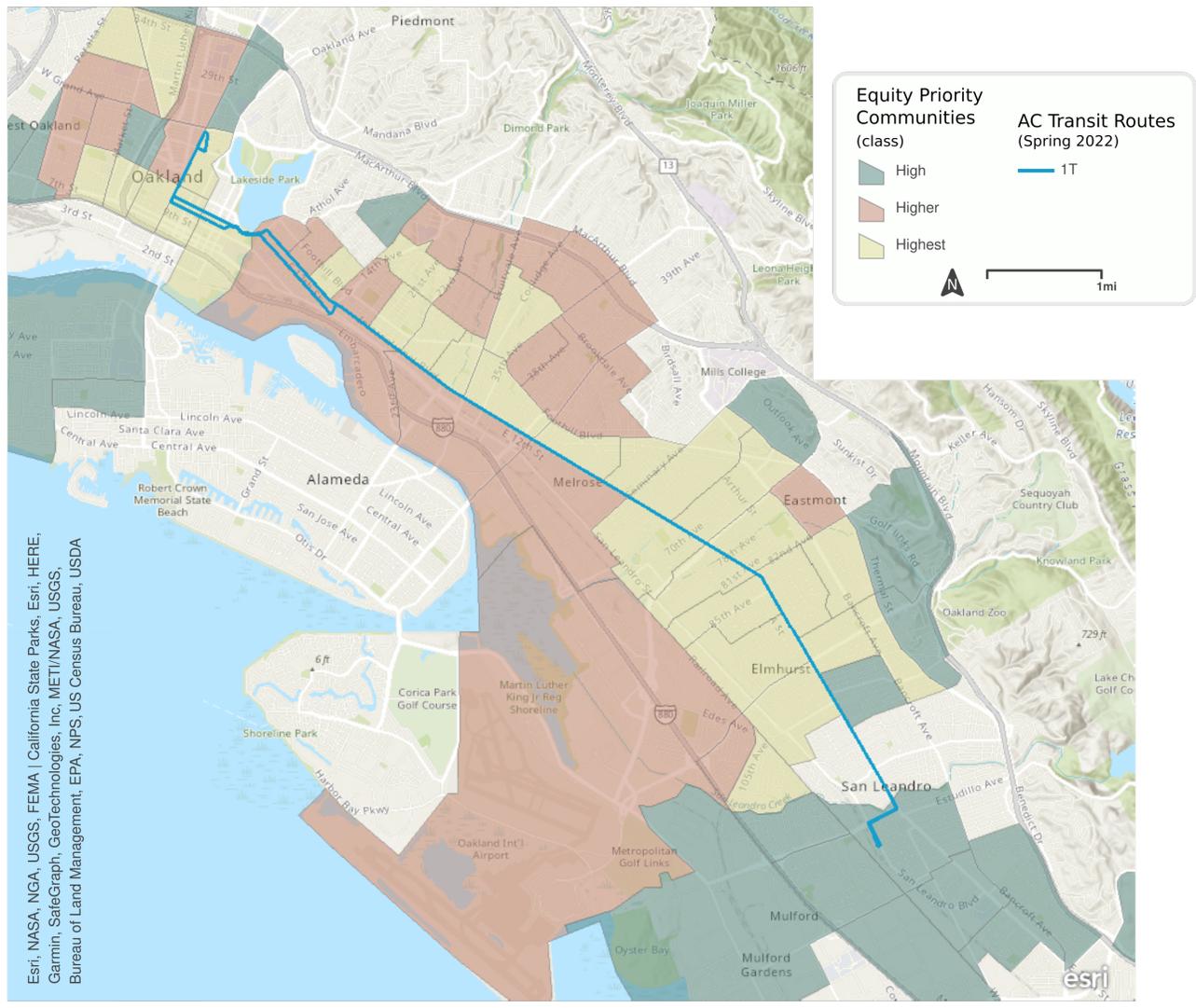


Figure 15: Map of the Tempo route overlaid on Equity Priority Communities. Bus route from “Maps & Schedules,” accessed April 21, 2022. EPC map from *Equity Priority Communities / Association of Bay Area Governments*, May 2021, accessed February 24, 2022

### 6.3 Interview Summaries

Some efforts were made to bring community members into the decision-making process, but the community members and outside staff I spoke with felt that any equity perspective had come from their efforts and would not have been present if AC Transit had been left to its own devices. Another common thread in the interviews was a desire, from both involved planners and community members, for the planning agencies to better understand the communities they were affecting.

Steven Boland was a Senior Associate and multimodal transit planner for [Nelson \ Nygaard](#) working on the Oakland EBBRT when they were hired by the cities of Oakland and Berkeley to provide Local Preferred Alternatives (LPAs) for the project. He recalled an intense community outreach effort in Berkeley in anticipation of push-back from the public, but much less in Oak-

land perhaps because their goals were already aligned with AC Transit's for the project. However, in both cities most of the opposition came from people who were not primarily bus riders and who objected to the removal of parking spaces along busy commercial corridors. Much of the planning and outreach work for this project was done in the 2010s, before ideas of equity metrics and mobility justice had crystallized in the planning field; although Boland was able to make the case to listen respectfully to all of the community's concerns, there were very few mechanisms in place to do more with this feedback. The City of Oakland in particular has made great strides in prioritizing BIPOC in their planning efforts now. Boland reflected the hopeful note that more citizen involvement earlier in the planning and design processes has created positive change, like building an Equity Framework into the [Oakland Bicycle Plan](#).

Joël Ramos was hired by [TransForm](#) as someone who both lived in East Oakland and had deep experience conducting community engagement around issues of transit and mobility with marginalized communities. Ramos was specifically tasked with ensuring that rider views were incorporated in the planning process. One of the big issues that he faced in gathering feedback about the proposed EBBRT project was in how to describe the project itself – on such a busy corridor that had already seen one bus route change recently (from the 82 to the 1 / 1R) how could he convince fatigued community members that this hugely disruptive project was going to be a benefit to them? Abstract ideas like upgrading city utilities, moving away from auto-centric modes of thinking and traveling, and a modernized bus system were not going to catch the attention of the struggling communities along the International Blvd corridor. What he understood from past work in similar neighborhoods was that emphasizing that slow service, long travel times, and overcrowded buses would continue *without* BRT service would draw in more people. One of the major sectors that they targeted in their outreach were merchants along the corridor, again not something that was standard practice at the time but TransForm was able to show by example what AC Transit should have been doing with their outreach funding. Although it was not standard at the time, Ramos was able to bring together AC Transit and other planning staff with community members for consultation sessions in spaces like community hubs and senior centers that locals were already familiar with. TransForm and Ramos also worked with local artists at YouthUprising to create a hip-hop music video encouraging folks to engage in the feedback process.<sup>144</sup>

Reginald Burnette (RB) is a lifelong resident of Oakland, an avid cyclist with his kids, and feels that the 1 Tempo is a huge improvement over previous service. Although some folks have difficulty navigating the new system and the center-boarding platform, it has greatly improved service along a corridor that needed it badly. Again, though, he emphasized the outsize impact the extended construction had on everyday life along the corridor. RB's hope is that in the future the agency will consider that type of impact more seriously in future projects. But the disproportionate impact of lost parking on small businesses along the corridor was not considered as thoroughly as it could have been. Also, despite the addition of a bike lane along International Blvd, he doesn't feel like cyclist safety has changed much on the street. The bus-only lanes have

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144 Youth UpRising, *Oakland for BRT*, April 2012, accessed March 12, 2022

been too tempting for drivers bypassing the now-single-lane traffic and there has been a marked uptick in speeding and accidents along the corridor from the lack of enforcement of the bus-only lanes. In combination with the increased traffic due to the removal of a travel lane, cycling has become increasingly fraught.

In speaking with Margaretta Lin of [Just Cities](#), I got a picture of the difficulties faced by merchants along the corridor during the construction of Tempo. She was hearing many requests from business owners for some sort of support, which hadn't been planned into AC Transit's budget for the project and therefore had to come from a different source. Eventually the City of Oakland had set up funds to assist business owners with mitigating the costs that the massive disruption in travel patterns caused, but those funds were difficult to access and were not sufficient to keep businesses open during the long construction. Lin was instrumental in advocating for these funds, and was motivated by the lack of interest that she saw from the City in preventing displacement of small businesses along the corridor. Despite the existence of the funds, many bureaucratic hoops were required to access them meaning that many businesses were not able to survive. The nearby affluent Piedmont Ave corridor nearly tripled (from 163 to 422 businesses) between 2014 and 2019, whereas 37% of businesses (502) along International Blvd were lost in the same time period. Many of the businesses lost along International Blvd were legacy businesses – had been around for five or more years before 2014 – or were otherwise cornerstones of their communities.<sup>145</sup> The holes that this leaves in a community's fabric are difficult to repair and can contribute to residential displacement.

## 6.4 Five Pillars Analysis

In looking at the Five Pillars in Transit Center's *Guidebook*,<sup>146</sup> we can see the difference in project outreach methodologies and how they have (and have not) met the MJE goals of the Pillars. While quantifiable data – ridership numbers, bus crowding, and the like – may have pointed to a need for BRT along the International Blvd corridor, it is unclear if it is truly benefiting those who rely on bus service every day for their basic needs. Quick ridership recovery during the pandemic would indicate that it is certainly filling a gap, but there is also still an elevated amount of car traffic along the route. And the lack of inclusion in initial studies of feeder routes and residents along side streets means that there may be a significant local population who are no longer served by their local bus service.

### **Pillar 1 : Articulate a vision of equitable transit, and explain why resources must be prioritized for marginalized people**

Because so much of this project was put on paper before the wider push for equity and accountability to communities were integrated into more standard planning practices, looking back on efforts to engage the public is difficult. Much of the work that Ramos and Lin did to bring community concerns to agency and municipal planners was ahead of its time, and it is

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145 Lin et al., [East Oakland Impacts from BRT Summary](#), pg 36-41.

146 ["Equity in Practice : A guidebook for transit agencies"](#)

unsurprising that both feel that their efforts were stymied at every turn. Ramos was clear that the amount of work that he did to “just bring folks to the table” was only because he was working through a third party, and that there was little impetus from either AC Transit or the City of Oakland to support these activities. Although AC Transit had an outreach fund, as Lin indicated, they were primarily conducting efforts at the informing, consultation, and placation levels of Arnstein’s Ladder (shown on the left of Figure 8 on page 21) where feedback is solicited but does not necessarily have bearing on project outcomes and participants from the most affected communities are not specifically targeted. RB was very clear that, as a resident, he felt well-informed about the project but that not much other effort was put into engaging with the community to provide feedback that would influence the project.

All of this adds up to a lack of overarching vision of the project from an equity standpoint. Perhaps this is because of a lack of previous BRT projects as a template, as Ramos suggested, or an over-reliance on the quantifiable numbers of ridership instead of discussions with communities along the route, or Oakland’s desire to build an attractive bus line as a showpiece. While some groups involved, whether officially or simply as concerned community members, were able to influence some decisions it is clear that Pillar 1 was not a priority in the Tempo project.

## **Pillar 2 : Connecting transit to other inequities in people’s lives**

The Just Cities report discusses several of the issues that cut across silos : the lack of transparency about funding availability, confusing requirements to access it, bureaucratic limitations on timing and coverage, and other project aspects that were largely opaque to community members. Ramos mentioned that Andy Nelson at the East Bay Asian Youth Center was a strong advocate for community businesses in this respect, and that without his efforts much of the funding would have gone unused. It is clear that “community leaders were concerned about displacement impacts of the BRT construction on Corridor small businesses... and the mobility impacts on elderly or disabled resident from the loss of 30 bus stops along the Corridor.”<sup>147</sup> This points to one of the project’s major MJE failings in addressing past harms along the International Blvd corridor. Because the project was largely planned before integration of equity metrics into project planning, there was no framework that the community could point to to bolster their concerns. People like Ramos and Lin could only hope that decision-makers would consider community feedback, but had no quantifiable data or metrics to back up the opinions or force the hand of planners.

Echoing much of the feedback in the report, RB was frustrated at the lack of consideration given to the impact of construction along the whole corridor for the elderly, those with mobility challenges, deliveries to businesses, and the everyday lives of locals. Boland was very clear that future planning projects need to focus on equity in all aspects of planning, from project selection to individual design decisions, which in turn means understanding how a project intersects with all aspects of life in that area. While much of the ire is focused on the construction phase of

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147 Lin et al., *East Oakland Impacts from BRT Summary*, pg 20.

Community Leaders	Professional Voices
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engage community early in the planning process</li> <li>● Find ways to fix the mitigation fund allocation</li> <li>● Offer incentives for residents to use transit</li> <li>● Improve bus network connections</li> </ul> <p><b>Overall Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hopeful about reduction in pollution emissions</li> <li>● Increase in property values - future development</li> </ul> <p><b>Disinvestment and Gentrification Concerns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Concerns of gentrification and displacement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How is the city going to address it moving forward?</li> <li>○ EBBRT signals displacement and gentrification</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Long-time disinvestment in East Oakland</li> <li>● Disparities in construction build out</li> <li>● Cut down (loss) of trees</li> <li>● Businesses wanted to be left alone</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of Engagement and Accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The community the project is intended for was not engaged</li> <li>● Project created by “technocrats” - disconnected from the community</li> <li>● Lack of accountability across institutional actors</li> <li>● People supported the project (idea) but not how it developed</li> <li>● Lack of business input on mitigation fund process</li> </ul>	<p><b>Overall Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EBBRT will improve commute time</li> <li>● EBBRT will add construction jobs</li> <li>● Oakland’s busiest corridor will see an improvement</li> <li>● EBBRT will improve road conditions</li> <li>● EBBRT is AC Transit’s coveted project</li> <li>● AC Transit: Important to have a physical presence in the corridor</li> </ul> <p><b>Small Business Impacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Construction creates disruptive impacts on merchants</li> <li>● Small businesses need “hand holding” (technical assistance)</li> <li>● City of Oakland and AC Transit have structural challenges</li> <li>● Limited attention was paid to mitigation impacts and funding</li> <li>● Businesses don’t understand the mitigation funds process</li> <li>● Difficult to keep track of local hiring goals</li> <li>● Small businesses are not the only constituents, but they have more opportunity to vocalize concerns</li> </ul> <p><b>Other Concerns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EBBRT does not have a vision</li> <li>● Some people do not know the project is happening</li> <li>● Internal political difficulties</li> <li>● Connection between EBBRT and displacement/gentrification isn’t proven</li> </ul>

Figure 16: Feedback from both community leaders and professionals describing the positives, impacts, and concerns about the 1 Tempo project.  
Source : Margaretta Lin et al., *East Oakland Displacement Status and Impacts from the BRT Project Summary*, technical report (Oakland: Just Cities, June 2021), accessed March 30, 2022

Tempo, since it was the most obvious and most disruptive, understanding how a project fits into the wider community is also crucial. The work that Ramos did with YouthUprising<sup>148</sup> did a great job explaining some of the ways that a “simple” bus touches so many aspects of an individual’s life. Although the connections were not made officially, it seems that many who worked on or interacted with the Tempo project had a good understanding of how it would connect to other existing inequities in their lives, either as a positive or negative influence but little was done to integrate this understanding into the project process as a whole.

### Pillar 3 : Addressing past transit decisions’ harms

TransForm had been contracted by AC Transit to handle the community outreach in Oakland; according to Boland, they were more focused on doing their own outreach in Berkeley instead. He emphasized the personal safety concerns and other changes that this community was able to push forward in the Tempo plans. Much of that seems to be due to Ramos’ influence and efforts. Both felt that there had been a strong effort to focus on BIPOC feedback to influence the project, and that it had made it better. However, both also recognized the limitations of the outreach they conducted and that there was more work to be done around construction mitigation. Again, this is something that would

likely take up more space in the planning and discussions now, but it seems that at least some of the people involved were trying to understand the historical aspects of the issue.

Despite the lack of action during the planning phase of the Tempo project, Boland was quick to point out that the Oakland Department of Transportation is doing a much better job now. In particular, their Bicycle Plan’s 2019 update explicitly included an Equity Framework and included partnerships with community-based organizations like the [Scraper Bike Team](#), who are

Our communities look and function the way they do because of **INTENTIONAL HARM** perpetrated by **WHITE SUPREMACIST POLICIES** and actions by government and advocacy. Historical disenfranchisement, disinvestment, disproportionate exposure to pollution, and repressive policing in communities of color **CONTINUE TO NEGATIVELY IMPACT** our collective health, wealth, mobility and security.



**Seek to repair  
harm, not  
erase history**

Figure 17: Repairing harm does not mean ignoring or erasing history. It means facing the white supremacist policies that created that harm in the first place, and working with the impacted communities to address those issues in a way that is culturally appropriate. Source : [Principles of Mobility Justice](#).

148 Youth UpRising, [Oakland for BRT](#)

an important part of Oakland's rich cultural history.<sup>149</sup> By creating spaces where the community leads the conversation about upcoming plans, one aspect of past harms caused by ignoring local voices can be addressed. It also allows these groups to lift up other harms they have experienced in a format that provides an opportunity to have them addressed.

Another major factor of past harms that seems to be un-addressed (but that I think is a crucial component) is the aspect of timeliness of transit planning. With the amount of legislative and bureaucratic hurdles that a project must clear, it can be decades before any tangible progress is made. In that time, community needs shift as individuals move or change, too. Addressing the slow pace of implementation will be key to future efforts to address harms to under-served and under-invested communities. While changing the 40 and 82 buses into the 1 / 1R was potentially a step in the right direction – providing immediate, intermediate solutions while a major capital investment project wound its way through bureaucracy – it seems that this particular instance could have been handled with more cultural sensitivity and an eye towards equity rather than quantifiable metrics.

#### **Pillar 4 : Measure equitable outcomes for people and neighborhoods**

"Equity metrics are something I wish we had set up but that we didn't have yet."<sup>150</sup> One thing that Ramos was adamant about was the transformative power of planning projects, particularly transit, on future generations in the areas they affect. These projects can become a source of community strength and pride if they are done well, but can also breed distrust if they are not. Lack of equity metrics early in the planning stages of the Tempo project makes it difficult to compare with anything that is defined now other than through community members' anecdotes. While MJE elevates this type of feedback to the same level as quantifiable metrics, it is clear that agencies and municipalities are still going to rely on "hard numbers." Although discussions about including MJE in the project may have been happening at some levels, they had not reached implementation with AC Transit yet. TransForm, through Ramos' work, was pushing the equity agenda for the Tempo project, and they did more than they had been asked to do.

One point of success was the effort to train and hire local workers for jobs, particularly during the construction phase. RB was quick to point out the way AC Transit worked closely with the locally-run [Cypress Mandela Training Center](#) to quickly fill their construction needs. Nearly 200 locals took advantage of the free training and several years of steady work, bringing in \$7.8 million in wages.<sup>151</sup> While this is a drop in the larger Bay Area bucket, and is simply one data point, it is worth celebrating the small wins in an otherwise hotly contested project.<sup>152</sup>

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149 *Oakland Bicycle Plan*, accessed May 8, 2022

150 Joël Ramos (Former Regional Planning Director, TransForm), interview with the author, March 10, 2022.

151 *Tempo Project Information*, accessed May 8, 2022

152 Reginald Burnette (resident, East Oakland), interview with the author, February 9, 2022.

## Pillar 5 : Create processes for the most affected to exert meaningful influence over decisions

In some ways, this may have been the most successful aspects of the 1 Tempo project – they did not have a past project to use as a template, they were able to create one instead. Through efforts by people like Ramos, Boland, and Lin to ensure that a broader swath of the community was involved in the process, TransForm and Nelson \ Nygaard were able to push AC Transit in the direction of more equitable transit planning for the future. Although the agencies and municipalities involved did not seem to be ready to accept the feedback they were getting from community members, particularly the most affected and marginalized of the community, some things do seem to be slowly shifting.

Ramos was very clear that most of the changes to buses along International Blvd had not done much community outreach or consultation prior to making decisions. The lack of community consultation for consolidating the 40 and 82 into the 1, as well as 1R stop placement, created distrust within the community around AC Transit's decisions about their local bus changes. While the Tempo was designed as the next step in upgrading this route, many community members were understandably upset that changes were again being made with no room for their influence. Providing a space to “respectfully hear everyone’s concerns,” as Boland put it, is not enough if those concerns are not heard until it is too late to change the plans.

The concern about lack of community influence was echoed by RB as well, who felt that AC Transit did a good job presenting ideas to the community, but need to address concerns from business and residents better by being open to re-evaluating project based on feedback. He got right to the heart of MJE, and this Pillar in particular, by requesting that community ideas be allowed to influence plans. “Or, better yet, build a better understanding of how the plans will impact the community, and what their needs are in the first place, before starting the project.”<sup>153</sup>

### 6.5 Current Project Status

Although many of the concerns raised about the BRT route were reasonable, the amount of time it took to build belies the National Bus Rapid Transit Institute’s advocacy for BRT as a low-cost, rapid-implementation solution to providing rail-levels of service. At a total cost of \$232 million, unfortunately Tempo doubled cost since final approval in 2012 and ended up being nearly as expensive as non-electrified light rail.<sup>154</sup> Dedicated lanes are a critical feature of a BRT system<sup>155</sup> but they are not the only one, and simply running a bus along a fixed route ignores the advantages of it being a bus.<sup>156</sup> Including features that take advantage of the non-fixed-route options of a bus-based system may help alleviate other concerns but unfortunately, with a timeline and budget like Tempo it’s going to be difficult to convince residents and riders that more BRT lines are beneficial.

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153 Reginald Burnette (resident, East Oakland), interview with the author, February 9, 2022.

154 Rudick, “Oakland BRT Line Opens”

155 *The Online Bus Rapid Transit Planning Guide*, 4th ed. (Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, 2017)

156 Annie Weinstock et al., *Recapturing Global Leadership in Bus Rapid Transit : A Survey of Select U.S. Cities* (ITDP, May 2011)

Barely two months after the line opened, deep in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tempo line was carrying nearly 20% of its anticipated capacity which still made it the most heavily used line in all of AC Transit's service area.<sup>157</sup> Despite this popularity, there is also resentment about the time it took to open and the issues caused by construction along the route.<sup>158</sup> Shortening the timeline is necessary to deliver useful service and prove the efficacy of such systems.<sup>159</sup>

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157 Michael Eshleman (Service Planning Manager, AC Transit), interview with the author, October 17, 2020.

158 Lin et al., *East Oakland Impacts from BRT Summary*, pg 20.

159 *TransitCenter Blog*, "[Lessons from Oakland's 20-Year BRT Saga](#)"

If just a fraction of the people riding transit before the [COVID-19] crisis begin driving alone, traffic congestion will be so severe that it could paralyze the city's economic recovery. Without action, transit-dependent San Franciscans will bear the costs of traffic congestion, like an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 on slower, more crowded buses.



## 7 SFMTA's Van Ness Ave and Geary Blvd projects in San Francisco

Also multi-decade projects, the Geary Boulevard and Van Ness Avenue BRT implementations have a lot of hopes riding on them for all of San Francisco. The city has long had a “Transit First” policy<sup>160</sup> and since the early 1990s the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA, colloquially known as Muni) planned for these routes to have high-speed transit lines.<sup>161</sup> These two projects have also faced similar pushback as the Tempo line in the East Bay primarily from business owners and car drivers<sup>162</sup> who do not want to lose travel lanes or parking spaces. Van Ness BRT in particular was designed from the beginning to be a demonstration project for San Francisco, as the Bay Area population booms and more people move through and into the geographically limited area. However, due to the scale of the project and management confusion that resulted in construction delays, the implementation of BRT along Van Ness has created an atmosphere of distrust between various city agencies and the citizens. While the Van Ness BRT line opened to great fanfare on April 1, 2022,<sup>163</sup> the Geary project has been scaled back to no longer include BRT.<sup>164</sup> The latter development as part of San Francisco’s Quick Build program<sup>165</sup> and as a stepping stone towards eventual subway service is a particularly hopeful development in addressing immediate community needs for improved transit service.

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Previous page : photo from [Charles Haynes](#) on flickr ([CC BY-SA 2.0](#)). Quote from Amy Fowler, “38 Geary Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes,” San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), August 24, 2020.

160 “Transit–First Policy,” accessed October 28, 2021

161 Andy Nash et al., *The Four Corridor Plan: Long-Range Fixed Guideway Plan*, technical report (San Francisco County Transit Authority, June 1995)

162 Jason Henderson, PhD (Professor, San Francisco State University), interview with the author, March 2, 2022.

163 *City Announces Opening of Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit System*, Press Release, April 2022, accessed April 11, 2022

164 Amy Fowler, “Geary Temporary Transit Lanes Approved to Become Permanent,” July 2021, Text, accessed November 23, 2021

165 *San Francisco Releases Updated Vision Zero Action Strategy to Prevent Traffic Deaths*, Press Release, November 2021, accessed March 8, 2022

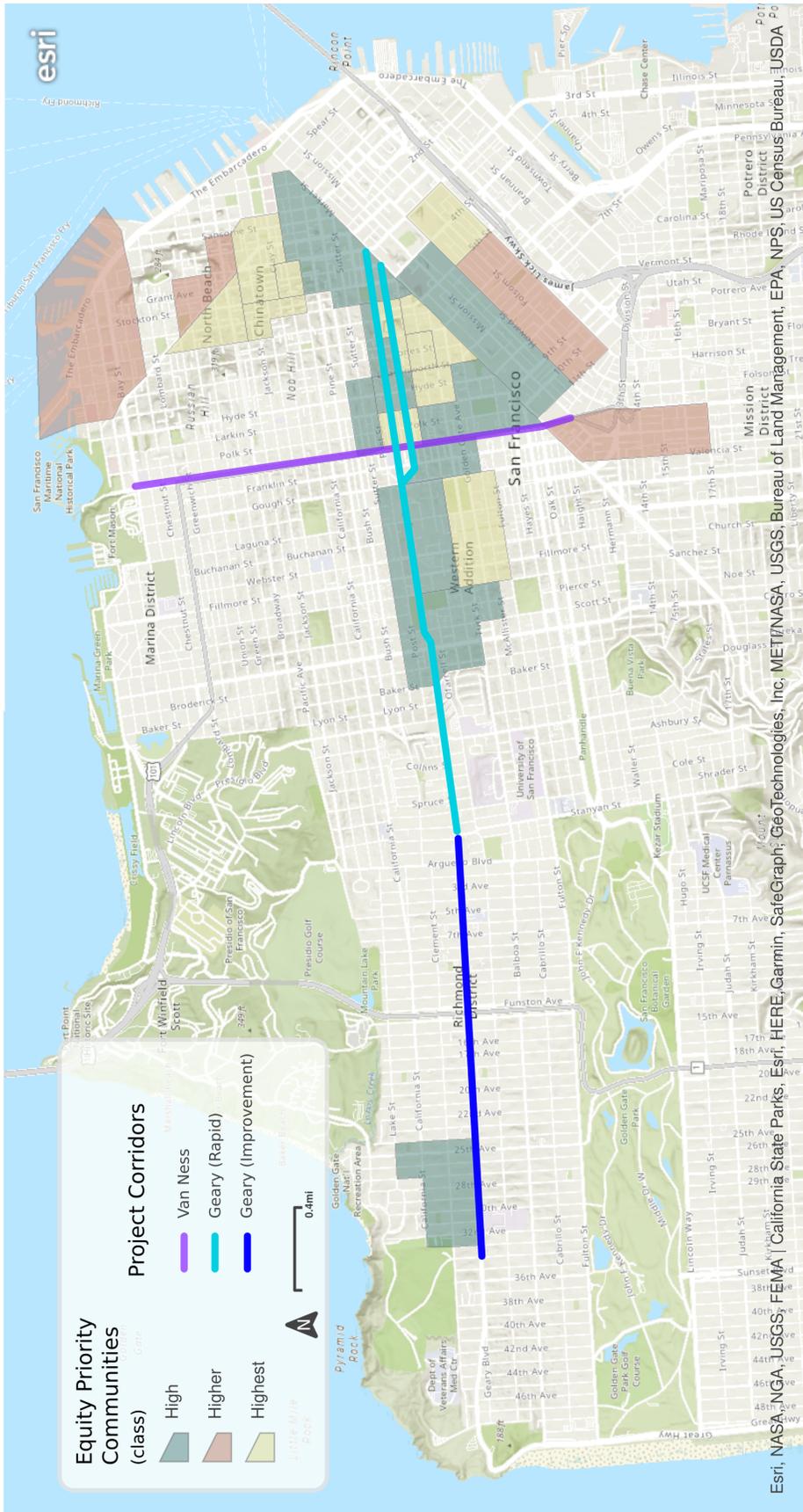


Figure 18: Map of the Geary Blvd and Van Ness Ave routes overlaid on Equity Priority Communities. Geary route from *Geary Boulevard Improvement Project*, Online, December 2017, accessed October 28, 2021. Van Ness route from *Van Ness Improvement Project – SFMTA*, Online, May 2013, accessed November 28, 2021. EPC map from *Equity Priority Communities / Association of Bay Area Governments*, May 2021, accessed February 24, 2022



## 7.1 Van Ness Improvement Project Summary

Originally intended to be the “spine” of the city, Van Ness Avenue is currently a main route from Marin to San Francisco and points south through San Francisco. It also served as a dividing line between the mansions of the rich on the north edge of the city and the crowded working-class neighborhoods in the south. At 125 feet wide, it was clearly not designed to be crossed, but to move large numbers of people and goods. Although its use as a firebreak in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake created opportunities for destroyed Market Street businesses to relocate there, the quick rebuilding of Market Street itself rapidly drained Van Ness of its commercial potential again. The 1915 Panama-Pacific Expo, which also constructed vast works like the Palace of Fine Arts, included a tramway down the median of Van Ness to move visitors from downtown to the Expo. The boom from the expo and the explosion of personal automobiles meant that both housing and auto showrooms were built along Van Ness through the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>166</sup> Sadly, between increased traffic from the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937 and increasing dominance of personal automobiles, the Van Ness streetcar was removed in the 1950s.<sup>167</sup> With the conversion of the auto showrooms to house offices and restaurants since the 1970s, Van Ness has transformed several times over the last century and a half; the creation of bus-only lanes and addition of BRT service is yet another chapter in the avenue’s grand history.<sup>168</sup>

The center-running service was part of the project approval in 2018, and was designed both to be aligned with BRT standards and serve as an example for BRT rollout in other parts of San Francisco. In particular, the project to get BRT service to Van Ness was expected to create a “toolkit” of options and local knowledge that would help future planners implement BRT on other corridors in San Francisco. Designed as an initial overview, the Van Ness Feasibility Study does not go into great detail about existing conditions along the corridor although the 2006 report does make an effort to discuss both the need to develop a comprehensive plan that supports multiple transit uses (commute, nightlife, school, etc.) as well as taking into account the fact that nearly half the households in the corridor did not have a car. The report notes the low density of housing in this area, but does not address the demographics of these residents although it does have a long section of information about bicycle and pedestrian safety along the corridor, including strong emphasis on the need for improvement.<sup>169</sup>

The ribbon cutting event for the Van Ness BRT service on April 1, 2022, was an exciting mo-

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Previous page : photo from Nehama Rogozen, *Van Ness Improvement Project Nears Completion*, April 2021.

166 *San Francisco General Plan : Van Ness Avenue Introduction*, July 1995, accessed February 20, 2022

167 Joe Fitzgerald Rodriguez, “Trees, Historic Trolley Poles to Be Removed for Bus Project,” *The San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco), January 2016, accessed February 20, 2022

168 One of the public comments on the FEIS/FEIR for Van Ness pointed out that the service is going to be similar to the removed streetcar line, and brings up the good point of how to maintain these systems rather than continually remove and rebuild them. This line of inquiry is definitely worth exploring in another context. Source : San Francisco County Transportation Agency, “Appendix I (cont’d) : Individual Comment Letters and Responses,” in *Final EIS/EIR for the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project* (July 2013), accessed November 28, 2021

169 *Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Feasibility Study*, Feasibility Study (San Francisco County Transportation Authority, December 2006), accessed February 21, 2022

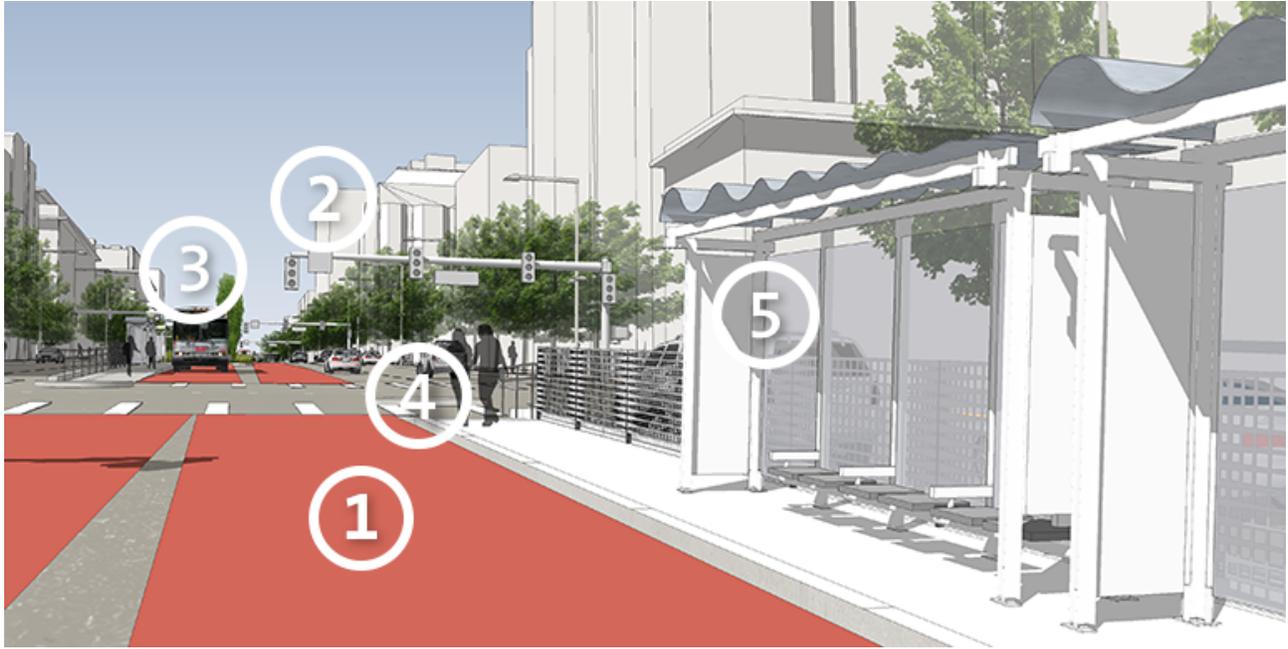


Figure 19: Bus Rapid Transit on Van Ness will be a part of Muni’s Rapid Network, prioritizing frequency and reliability for customers. The planned improvements are expected to cut travel times for Golden Gate Transit and the 47, 49 and 90 Muni routes by 32 percent.

Some features of Bus Rapid Transit on Van Ness will include:

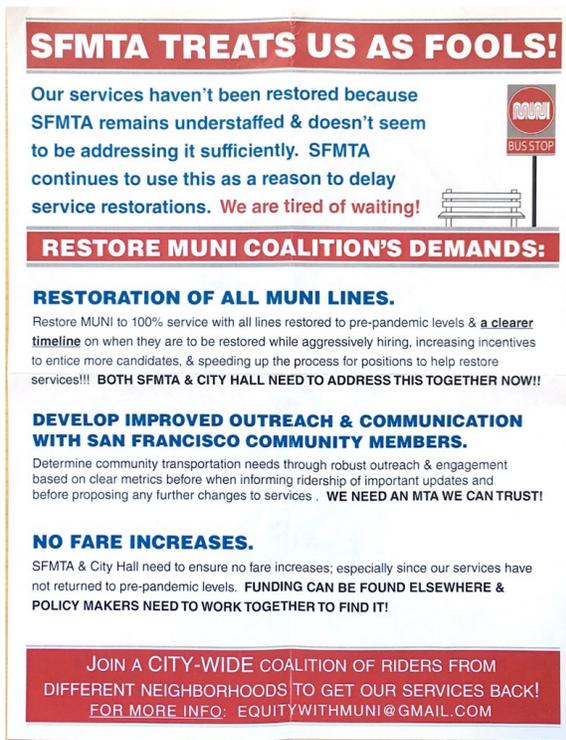
1. Dedicated transit-only lanes that are physically separated from the other traffic lanes, for use by Muni and Golden Gate Transit buses only.
2. Enhanced traffic signals optimized for north-south travel with Transit Signal Priority, which gives buses the green light as they approach an intersection.
3. Low-floor vehicles and all-door boarding, which will make it quicker and easier for passengers to load and unload at each stop.
4. Safety enhancements for people walking like sidewalk extensions, median refuges, high visibility crosswalks and audible countdown signals.
5. Fully furnished boarding platforms that include shelters, seating and NextMuni prediction displays located at key transfer points.

Source : *Van Ness Improvement Project – SFMTA*, Online, May 2013, accessed November 28, 2021.

ment for transit advocates and riders alike due to the long and contentious path to get the service running. Although there was a celebratory air to the event, comments from speakers touched on the issue of construction delays and other hurdles. At the same time, members of the Equity with Muni coalition roamed the crowd handing out fliers emphasizing the lack of response from SFMTA to citizen complaints about Muni service. These folks were not hesitating to ensure that these fliers were handed to SFMTA staff, who were easily visible in their branded vests. The Van Ness BRT project ended up more than \$35 million over budget and took an extra two years of construction beyond projected buffers,<sup>170</sup> even 30 years after the corridor had been identified for transit service improvements. This delay in providing transportation improvements on a major thoroughfare is an issue of equity and community communication, and any efforts to improve equity in transportation planning will need to find ways of improving service more quickly.

<sup>170</sup> Ellie Schafer et al., *Van Ness Avenue: What Lies Beneath*, Report (San Francisco Civil Grand Jury, June 2021), accessed November 28, 2021.





(a) Citizens' demands of Muni – restoring all lines, improving outreach and communication, and no fare increases.

(b) Back of the flier, with what I assume is the group's logo.

Figure 20: A full-page flier that members of the Restore Muni Coalition were handing out during the Van Ness BRT opening event on April 1, 2022. I was particularly taken with the choice of imagery for the back. Full-page versions included in Appendix B on page 85.]

## 7.2 Geary Boulevard Improvement Project Summary

In the 1950s, homes and businesses along Geary Boulevard in San Francisco were cleared to make way for the Geary Expressway. Built in response to the explosion of private automobile ownership, and designed to facilitate car movement only through the city, eight lanes of traffic divided what was once a bustling neighborhood.<sup>171</sup> Barely a decade later, the 1961 plans for a BART route to Marin included a subterranean rapid train along Geary<sup>172</sup> in recognition of the slow bus service and heavy car traffic along the street.<sup>173</sup> Both the San Francisco County Transportation Agency (SFCTA) and Muni have been working since the 1990s to get rapid transit ser-

Previous page : (top) Photo from Michael Cabanatuan, "Upgrade of Muni's Geary Bus Line Moves Forward," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 2017, chap. Bay Area & State, accessed May 10, 2022 (bottom) Capture from SFCTA, [Geary Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Animation](#).

171 Ben Barnett, "Today in History: The Making of the Geary Expressway," October 4, 2018, Text

172 Yonah Freemark, *Crossing the Bay Again – But Not Necessarily with BART*, January 2010, accessed April 30, 2022

173 The BART service to Marin, and therefore service along Geary, was removed from the plan in 1965. For more details about the development of the BART system as a whole, see John King and Michael C. Healy, *BART: The Dramatic History of the Bay Area Rapid Transit System* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books), accessed April 30, 2022

vice (bus and subway) along the busy corridor.<sup>174</sup> Due to the pandemic, many of the service and infrastructure changes across all of San Francisco were able to be put into motion as quick-build projects due to lack of traffic and a need for more public space.<sup>175</sup>

### Geary Boulevard Improvement Project

-  Extension of side-running transit lanes to reduce unpredictable delays on blocks that do not yet have them between 28th and 15th avenues
-  Transit bulbs to decrease bus delays by allowing buses to remain in the travel lane when passengers load and unload
-  Bus stop changes to improve efficiency
-  Upgraded Transit Signal Priority to increase the likelihood buses get the green light at intersections
-  Accessible pedestrian signals and curb ramps to allow people with disabilities to safely travel on the corridor
-  Pedestrian bulbs at intersections to shorten crossing distances, make people walking more visible to motorists and reduce vehicle turning speeds
-  Enhanced median refuges to provide a safe place for people crossing Geary to wait

### Geary Rapid Project

-  Dedicated transit lanes to reduce unpredictable delays
-  Transit bulbs to decrease bus delays by allowing buses to remain in the travel lane when passengers load and unload
-  Bus stop changes to improve efficiency
-  Upgraded Transit Signal Priority to increase the likelihood buses get the green light at intersections
-  Calming the Geary Expressway by decreasing the number of travel lanes from four to two general-purpose lanes and one bus-only lane in each direction
-  Accessible pedestrian signals and curb ramps allow people with disabilities to safely travel on the corridor
-  Pedestrian bulbs at intersections to shorten crossing distances, make people walking more visible to motorists and reduce vehicle turning speeds
-  Pedestrian countdown signals to let people walking know how much time they have to safely cross the street
-  New crosswalks and enhanced medians to provide safe opportunities for people to get across Geary
-  Improvements for bicyclists crossing Geary on streets within the bike network that intersect the corridor

Figure 21: Streetscape and access improvements in the Geary projects – note most are primarily targeting public and active transit users.

Source : *Geary Rapid Project*, website, May 2013, accessed October 28, 2021 and *Geary Boulevard Improvement Project*, Online, December 2017, accessed October 28, 2021

174 Nash et al., *The Four Corridor Plan*

175 San Francisco’s Quick-Build Program was introduced in 2019, ahead of the pandemic, as part of their Vision Zero implementation. More information is available at [San Francisco Releases Updated Vision Zero Action Strategy to Prevent Traffic Deaths](#)

Two projects were started – the Geary Rapid Project and the Geary Boulevard Improvement Project – to improve service and access along Geary. The director of transportation of the SFMTA Jeffrey Tumlin laid out hopes that the Geary Rapid Project in particular would reconnect neighborhoods that have been separated by a chasm of asphalt and “highway-like conditions” at residents’ doorsteps.<sup>176</sup> Changes in quick-build procedures brought into force for the pandemic allowed for implementation of side-running transit lanes along specific parts of Geary within the Improvement Project boundaries.<sup>177</sup> The Rapid Project, largely complete by the end of October 2021, included underground utility upgrades as well as non-car improvements like new pedestrian crosswalks, bulb-outs, and upgraded curb ramps for accessibility.<sup>178</sup> I am focusing on the Geary Blvd Improvement Project here, since this report is primarily about bus service.

Other than the proposed BRT, these plans were relatively modest due to the continuing hope of running a subway under the street in the near future. The idea of a subway along Geary was introduced in 1937<sup>179</sup>, and a stop along Geary was in the 1961 BART service plans on the line into Marin.<sup>180</sup> A formal suggestion for funding Geary light rail was introduced in 2004 Countywide Plan, using money from Proposition K,<sup>181</sup> and in April 2022 more preliminary plans for the Geary subway were discussed at the SFCTA board meeting.<sup>182</sup> As it is an even bigger undertaking than BRT, it is likely that this Geary subway project will take even longer than the two- and three-decade implementation scales for BRT in the Bay Area despite local support.<sup>183</sup> These continuing time delays between community requests and project implementation need to be addressed if we planners are going to claim that our projects serve the local community, as needs and populations shift over the decades.

The original Geary Rapid Project included a center-running BRT line, in accordance with ITDP standards for high-quality BRT service,<sup>184</sup> but the lack of impact on traffic both along Geary and on side streets was a compelling reason for the SFMTA to seriously consider keeping these emergency transit lanes. Public feedback via an online survey concurred. It is the transit-dependent residents, many of whom are essential workers, who will be most exposed to COVID-19 if service were to return to its previous crowded and slow state.<sup>185</sup> Ridership peaked in early 2020, when the 38’s busiest week had over 24,000 daily boardings; the 38R was over 33,000. By spring

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176 “Mayor London Breed and SFMTA Celebrate Major Transit Milestone and Safety Improvements on Geary Boulevard,” Office of the Mayor, October 20, 2021, News Release

177 [Geary Boulevard Improvement Project](#)

178 Angie Genochio, “Geary Rapid Project Construction Forecast: October 8 to October 22, 2021,” September 30, 2021

179 Robert Ridgway and Alfred Brahdly, *Rapid Transit for San Francisco* (May 1936), accessed May 8, 2022

180 *Rapid Transit Newsletter Vol 4, No. 3*, September 1961, accessed April 29, 2022

181 *Countywide Transportation Plan*, technical report (San Francisco County Transportation Authority, July 2004), pg 92.

182 Angela Tsao, *San Francisco County Transportation Authority Board Meeting – April 12th, 2022*, Meeting minutes, April 2022, accessed March 24, 2022

183 San Francisco County Transportation Agency, “Appendix L : Responses to Comments,” in *Geary Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* (June 2018), accessed November 28, 2021

184 [The Online Bus Rapid Transit Planning Guide](#)

185 Fowler, “[38 Geary Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes](#)”

### TRANSIT MAINTENANCE & ENHANCEMENTS

41.2%

Muni, BART, Caltrain, Ferry  
Maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement  
Station/Access improvements  
Next generation transit planning

### STREETS & FREEWAYS

18.9%

Pedestrian and bicycle improvements  
Signals and traffic calming  
Street repaving  
Major street and freeway redesign planning

### PARATRANSIT

11.4%

Transit services for seniors and people with disabilities

### MAJOR TRANSIT PROJECTS

22.6%

Muni Bus/Train Reliability & Efficiency Improvements  
Muni and BART Core Capacity  
Caltrain Downtown Extension

### TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

5.9%

Transportation demand management  
Neighborhood and equity-focused planning and implementation

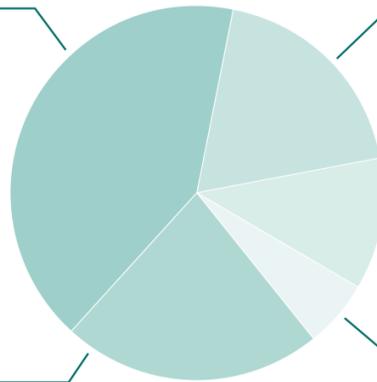


Figure 22: Fund allocation from the 2022 SFCTA Expenditure Plan, divvying up the projected \$2.6 billion (2020 dollars) in sales tax revenues over 30 years. (Includes both Priority 1 (conservative forecast) and Priority 2 (more optimistic) revenues.)

Source : *New Transportation Expenditure Plan*, accessed April 20, 2022.

2021, ridership on both lines had recovered to nearly 15,000 on each per day.<sup>186</sup> This second-most-utilized corridor in the Muni system needed several different versions of service to accommodate these riders –

- 38 : 24-hour service daily,
- 38R : a rapid version of the same 38 route, running 6am – 9pm daily,
- 38AX : express service at peak times covering some parallel streets, and
- 38BX : another version of the same 38AX route catching different neighborhoods.<sup>187</sup>

Adding a subway would drastically improve transit times along the Geary corridor. However, especially in an earthquake zone, underground construction is a long and arduous process, currently exemplified by the Central Subway Project. 1.7 miles long, eleven years late<sup>188</sup> (and counting...<sup>189</sup>), and with a budget that has ballooned from \$530 million<sup>190</sup> to \$1.5 billion,<sup>191</sup> this much-delayed project<sup>192</sup> has faced much official and unofficial criticism.<sup>193</sup> Like with BRT projects, the Central Subway was approved in the early 2000s<sup>194</sup> and is only just getting to the point of ac-

186 Melissa Fallon, *Transit Ridership*, San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency, September 2020, accessed May 11, 2022

187 These last two lines have been suspended due to the pandemic, but also do not have any ridership data available from SFMTA.

188 *Central Subway: Too Much Money for Too Little Benefit*, Report (San Francisco Civil Grand Jury, 2011), pg 7, accessed November 28, 2021.

189 *Report: Central Subway Opening Likely to Be Delayed Yet Again, Might Not Happen This Year*, March 2022, accessed May 11, 2022

190 Michael Cabanatuan, "Transit Panel Readies \$3.3 Billion Wish List for Gov. Davis / Hwy. 4, I-680 Improvements among Projects," *SFGATE*, March 2000, chap. Bay Area & State, accessed May 11, 2022

191 *Central Subway Project*, Text, January 2013, accessed April 20, 2022

192 *San Francisco's Central Subway Project: The Long Road to Opening*, accessed May 11, 2022

193 *Central Subway*, accessed May 11, 2022

194 LiPo Ching, *San Francisco's Central Subway Project Set to Open in 2022*, November 2021, accessed May 11, 2022

tually carrying anyone from place to place. One bright spot in the Central Subway plans is the creation of the T Third tram line in 2000, serving much of the same route as the eventual subway.<sup>195</sup> This interim solution's popularity shows the need for crafting immediate ways to address transit problems while waiting for longer-term plans to come to fruition. Similar steps have already been taking along Geary, with the 38R, 38AX, and 38BX services. Addressing the immediate concerns in a community can help move projects forward and demonstrate transit need while waiting for major capital projects like a subway.



Figure 23: Map of the Geary Improvement Project area with the location of the Temporary Transit Lanes, new signals allowing Muni buses a head start on other traffic, and where stops have been enhanced with temporary bus bulbs.

Source : *Geary Boulevard Improvement Project*, Online, December 2017, accessed October 28, 2021

Although the Geary Blvd projects were well under way before the pandemic began, both the ebb in car traffic and the constant bus ridership along the route were compelling reasons to accelerate the process. Despite Muni’s efforts to increase service during the pandemic along this normally-overcrowded line, there were still issues of crowding on the buses due to the number of essential workers and other individuals who depend on the 38 / 38R service. “Emergency temporary transit lanes” (Figure 23 on page 63) were installed along Geary Boulevard to separate bus traffic from other traffic, which improved service reliability and alleviated some crowding issues.<sup>196</sup> The effort to bring these lanes into force during the pandemic temporarily paused work on the Geary Boulevard Improvement Project, which turned out to be a fantastic opportunity to test out these quick-build changes, too.<sup>197</sup> Community organizations and neighbors were able

195 For a breakdown of the difficulties that the T Third line faced, and how they compare to those of the Central Subway, see pages 17-24 of *SFMTA and the Central Subway*.

196 Fowler, “38 Geary Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes”

197 Fowler

to give real-time feedback to the SFMTA about these emergency transit lanes and, combined with internal agency metrics, it was clear that these side-running bus lanes were vastly preferred to the plan of a center-running BRT system.<sup>198</sup> These lanes are not BRT but the process of paring down the project provides some illuminating examples of how the lack of communication around the Van Ness project soured public opinion on BRT in San Francisco.

### 7.3 Community Feedback

One of the issues with the Van Ness Improvement Project was the number of agencies involved. Because of the construction needed for center-running bus lanes and the age of the underground utilities, SFMTA proposed moving them from the center of the road to the sides and upgrading them in the process. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and Department of Public Works would, ostensibly, be in charge of that aspect of the project but weren't brought into the planning process until later. This meant that actual contractors were brought in at a later date as well, rather than being able to give their input on plans earlier.<sup>199</sup> Lack of communication and coordination between departments led to resentment and overlooked basic technical reviews. Unfortunately, one of the overlooked items was the map of utilities along Van Ness Avenue, which turned out to be inaccurate to such a degree that work could not begin for over a year. (See Figure 24 on page 65 for more details.) Instead of doing something as simple as walking down the street and noting discrepancies between the map and existing utility covers, the contractor instead began exploratory digging on block after block to find something they could begin working on.<sup>200</sup> All citizens were seeing was constant construction and no indication of any progress, which did not engender any sympathy for project delays when they were finally communicated.

With all of these issues, it's no surprise that the Civil Grand Jury<sup>201</sup> decided to investigate in 2021. This "watchdog" group of citizens were very concerned with the slow pace of construction along Van Ness and lack of communication from SFMTA about the project status, leading many to wonder if the whole endeavor was a waste of taxpayers' money. Funding for the Van Ness project had been approved by overwhelming majority in 2003's Proposition K – a sales tax increase specifically to pay for BRT service that would increase both capacity and reliability of bus service along the busy thoroughfare.<sup>202</sup> Overall plans and funding were approved unani-

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198 Bianna Nguyen, *Geary Community Advisory Committee Meeting – January 12, 2022*, Meeting minutes, November 2020, accessed March 24, 2022

199 Kevin Truong, "What went wrong with San Francisco's Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit project?," *San Francisco Business Times*, June 30, 2021, accessed November 28, 2021

200 *Civil Grand Jury Probes Delays in Van Ness Improvement Project*, Civic, host Laura Wenus, 335 (November 1, 2021), podcast, accessed November 28, 2021

201 In California, each county has a Civil Grand Jury made up of that county's citizens who volunteer for a year to serve as an independent review committee of county policy and projects. Although some Civil Grand Juries have the ability to issue criminal indictments, their primary purpose is to serve as a non-political investigative body and produce reports on topics of interest to the citizens of their county. Petitions can also be made to a Civil Grand Jury to request that they focus on a particular topic. See "Civil Grand Jury – Jury Service," California Courts for more details.

202 *November 4, 2003 Consolidated Municipal Election* (Department of Elections)

mously by San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors in 2013, and ground was broken in 2016 with a completion date of 2019. However, with delays in construction and multi-agency coordination, that date has been pushed back to 2022 and costs have increased by nearly \$40 million. Although it is barely one-sixth of the original price tag these extra costs have revolved around an inaccurate utility map, the nearly-constant construction for the last five years, and poor project management.<sup>203</sup> Between this investigation and the lack of visible construction progress along Van Ness, it is not surprising that the project reflected poorly on other BRT efforts elsewhere in the city.

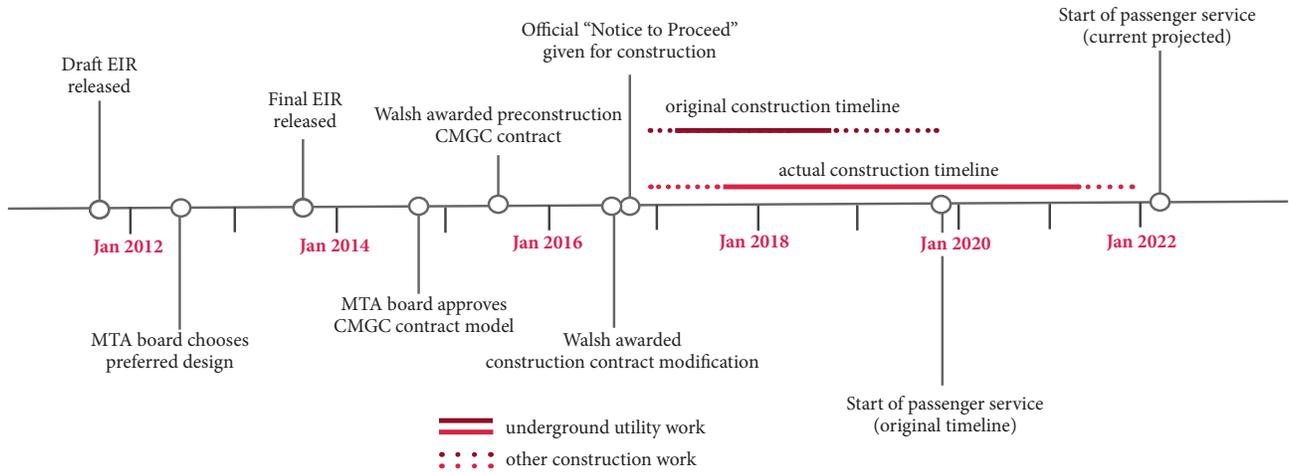


Figure 24: Timeline for the Van Ness project from EIR to passengers, highlighting the shift in construction period.  
 Source : Ellie Schafer et al., *Van Ness Avenue: What Lies Beneath*, Report (San Francisco Civil Grand Jury, June 2021), accessed November 28, 2021

203 Truong, "What went wrong with San Francisco’s Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit project?"

The Geary project seems to be learning from the lack of public communication around the Van Ness work, and have been publishing lots of information from community meetings and surveys. In particular, the Community Advisory Committee meeting on January 12, 2022, included survey results from nearly 600 respondents that included text comments and questions about transit priorities.<sup>204</sup> This survey explicitly requested feedback from both car drivers and bus riders, all of whom overwhelmingly supported improved transit and the side-running lanes that were already in place. Although some “wish[ed] we didn’t have to go through this expensive and time-consuming public process just to get some improvements” most were glad to have the opportunity to both learn about and provide feedback on the project.<sup>205</sup> Although some aspect of the “time-consuming public process” will be necessary even for more incremental changes, perhaps some of this frustration can be alleviated by introducing projects in a multi-phased fashion – for Geary, subway service may be the goal but improving bus service in the meantime is worthwhile and more easily achieved. Perhaps the BRT service would have been more favorably viewed if it had been framed as an intermediate step towards an eventual subway line, like the T Third for the Central Subway.

### Transit lanes: >60% of respondents support side-running lanes (n=582)

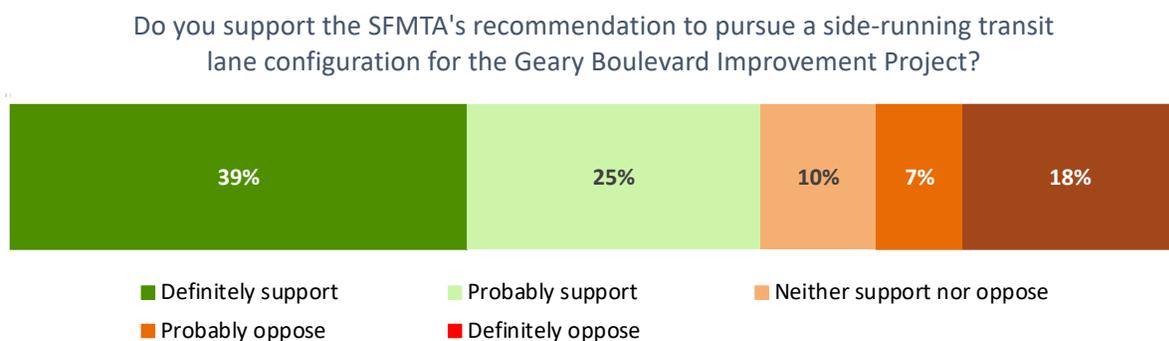


Figure 25: Feedback from nearly 600 community members along Geary gauging support for side-running transit lanes in the corridor.

Source : Bianna Nguyen, *Geary Community Advisory Committee Meeting – January 12, 2022, Meeting minutes*, November 2020, accessed March 24, 2022

With all of these issues and weighing the community input that has been gathered from several outreach activities, the Geary project is officially no longer a BRT project based on both community feedback and travel time metrics.<sup>206</sup> Very similar improvements in service level can be achieved with side-running transit-only lanes, bus bulbs, and various pedestrian improvements.<sup>207</sup> Much of the last has been implemented already; three particularly troublesome spots have already seen major work and have been well-used. Geary is one of the high-injury corri-

204 Nguyen, *Geary Community Advisory Committee Meeting – January 12, 2022*

205 Nguyen, pg 6.

206 Amy Fowler, “Share Your Feedback about Proposed Transit and Safety Improvements on Geary in the Richmond (Round 1),” September 2021, accessed November 23, 2021

207 Sophia Scherr, “Safety Improvements on Geary at Commonwealth/Beaumont,” September 2019, online, accessed March 24, 2022

dors in the city, and has long been targeted for pedestrian improvements, including new signals and median refuges to aid safe crossings.<sup>208</sup> In an effort to reach a broader audience for these new changes, the SFMTA has set up a “Self-guided Open House” space for the Geary Improvement Project’s current status to both inform and gather feedback<sup>209</sup> as well as an online portal.<sup>210</sup> Based on some of the interviews I conducted and looking at the survey results that the SFMTA collected, this project provides a useful and interesting point to show that Muni seems to be learning some lessons from the lack of communication around the Van Ness project.

## 7.4 Interview Summaries

Jason Henderson’s focus is on the politics, policy, and funding for Muni projects, but also has been keeping an eye on the public outreach conducted around the Van Ness and Geary projects.<sup>211</sup> He was personally involved in some of the community assessment during the EIR process in 2006ish and remembered that most of the push-back on the project came from folks in Russian Hill and the Marina who were concerned about losing parking and travel lanes for their private vehicles. This single-minded but loud and persistent group was able to sway some aspects of the project even in those early days. Henderson also expressed frustration at the lack of concerted effort to reach out to riders of the 47 and 49 routes along the Van Ness corridor that was slated for BRT. While he was hopeful in the early days that the Van Ness BRT could fulfill its original purpose of being a positive demonstration project for the city as a whole, the drawn-out nature of the construction phase has clearly turned people against it for now.

The lack of a transit-oriented champion in City Hall has been a consistent disappointment, and in combination with the rise of ride-hailing services, has left Muni an shell of an agency that is “under siege” on all sides. Although the agency is trying to make positive changes, the lack of political will to take plans to the implementation level is wasting that time and energy investment, and is likely burning out the folks in the agency who are doing the work. With much of the state’s new carbon tax subsidy prioritizing private ownership of electric vehicles rather than funding public transit improvements, Henderson is pessimistic about the potential for things to change any time soon. However, the results of a 2016 online mapping session resulted in a very clear picture of where citizens want to see subways implemented across the city. (Figure 26 on page 68.)

Echoing concerns from the community Zach Deutsch-Gross, Advocacy Director of the [San Francisco Transit Riders](#) (SFTR, formerly the SF Transit Riders Union), was very clear that the lack of communication about underground utility work on Van Ness was the major sticking point for the project. “The delay with Van Ness was not a delay with the transit project, but because

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208 “Why the Removal of a Pedestrian Bridge on Geary Is a Step Forward for Safety,” May 2020, accessed March 24, 2022

209 Amy Fowler, “Geary Boulevard Improvement Project: Self-guided Open House,” March 2022, accessed April 10, 2022

210 *Geary Boulevard Improvement Project Virtual Open House*, ArcGIS StoryMaps, November 2021, accessed February 15, 2022

211 Jason Henderson, *Street Fight: The Politics of Mobility in San Francisco* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), accessed February 1, 2022

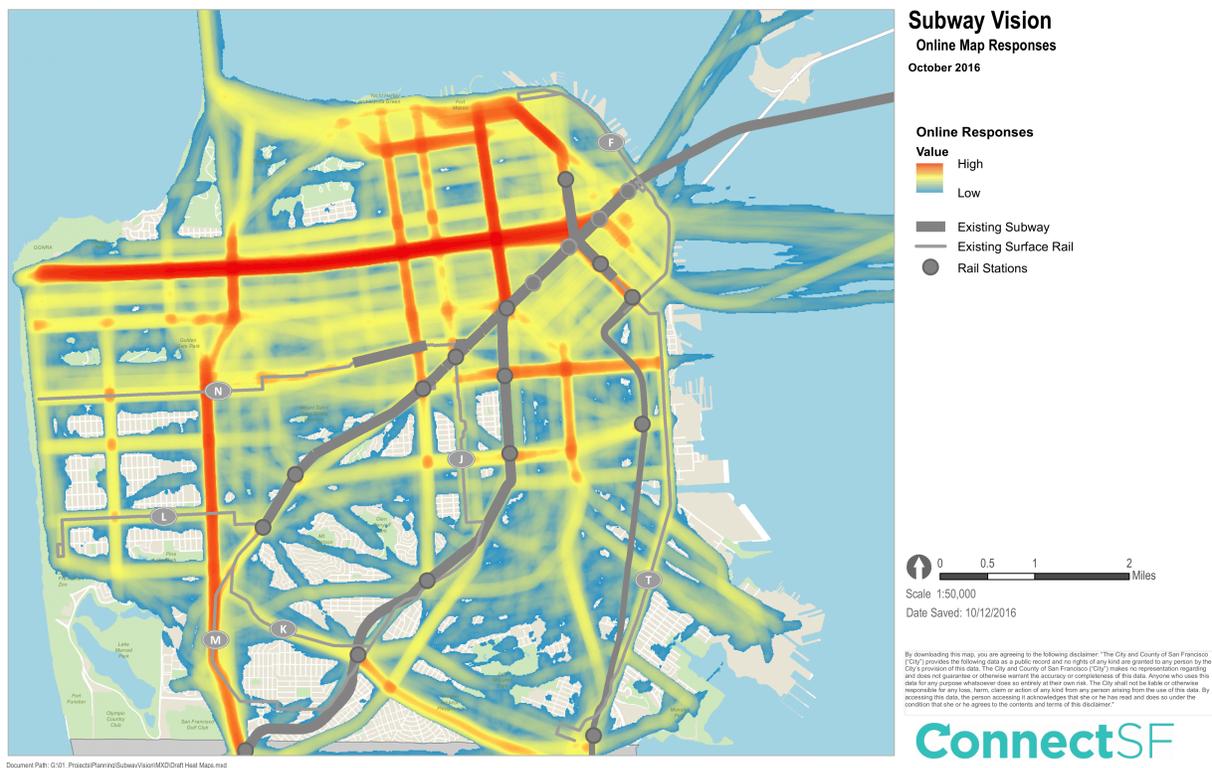


Figure 26: Heat map from 2,600 resident responses about priorities for subway service in San Francisco in 2016.

Source : *Subway Vision – Connect SF*, accessed May 11, 2022

it happened under the umbrella of a transit project, the failures there reflect on transit projects all across the city.” The difficulties with the Van Ness project may have also led the community along the Geary project corridor to be more skeptical of full BRT implementation there, too. However, it is a corridor that has been slated for subway service since 1937,<sup>212</sup> and much recent attention<sup>213</sup> – with that on the horizon, it makes sense for the communities to prefer the quick-build option of side-running transit lanes and bus bulb outs over the disruption and investment of center-running BRT. By making very similar improvements to the bus service with a smaller-scale project,<sup>214</sup> SFMTA also now has a chance to gauge public interest in transit along the corridor before making a huge capital investment. With the popularity of the new transit-only lanes, Deutsch-Gross is hopeful that the next round of outreach around transit improvements along the Geary corridor will have a better model with which to engage more of the community. In particular, with the potential for a major infrastructure project like a Geary subway coming, he emphasized the importance of starting conversations with the community sooner than it was with the bus lanes. Communities need to have a say in the types of projects that are developed around them, not just in design elements of a project selected by professionals. Deutsch-Gross

212 Ridgway and Brahdya, *Rapid Transit for San Francisco*

213 Tsao, *San Francisco County Transportation Authority Board Meeting – April 12th, 2022*

214 Fowler, “Geary Temporary Transit Lanes Approved to Become Permanent”

made sure to also call out the long lead time for major capital investment projects, like the Central Subway,<sup>215</sup> to emphasize the need to start community outreach and engagement sooner rather than later.

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215 Robert Pierce, *Central Subway Project History*, October 2017, accessed April 20, 2022



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## 7.5 Five Pillars Analysis

The Van Ness Improvement Project has been a high profile thorn in SFMTA's side since the project began. While the Geary Rapid Project has moved ahead to keep their emergency transit lanes permanently, these side-running lanes preclude it from being a true BRT route.<sup>216</sup> It's clear, though, that dedication to the center-running BRT service for Van Ness has been a major stumbling block, and perhaps letting go of that dream would have led to earlier project completion. The Geary project also has the benefit of learning from the mistakes along Van Ness which, while later in the process, have still been useful in terms of improving community outreach and information.

### **Pillar 1 : Articulate a vision of equitable transit, and explain why resources must be prioritized for marginalized people**

Henderson spoke more about the general city-wide Transit First policy<sup>217</sup> and its focus on commuters rather than local service, which clearly does not prioritize resources and transit access for marginalized residents of San Francisco. His book lays out the clear line between this focus and the private corporate buses that many see as harbingers of gentrification and exemplify the lack of investment in local transit services because public transit was not providing what was actually needed.<sup>218</sup> However, if only 20 - 25% of Muni ridership is commute traffic,<sup>219</sup> it is crucial that service decisions be primarily in support the other 80% of riders. The Van Ness project, in Henderson's view, is a demonstration project intended to get people interested in more of the same elsewhere in the city. Henderson called equity "a hopeful by-product" of such service improvements and investments rather than a central pillar of Muni's service planning.

Deutsch-Gross had similarly dim views of the broader vision for transit in San Francisco. He cited the reason for the lack of effort in the Geary project as based on a lack of diversity along the corridor. In particular, the side-running lanes are only in the Geary Improvement Project, which has only one Equity Priority Community (EPC); the Rapid Project area contains the Fillmore and Tenderloin neighborhoods which are predominantly made up of EPCs. there is only one remaining Equity Priority Community along the Geary corridor in contrast to Van Ness which touches half a dozen EPCs covering all three classes. The scope of the Geary project is also limited by the potential for major changes along the route later, "which is definitely not equitable and doesn't address immediate needs" – both the waiting for a later solution to the issue and the eventual high fares on such a system do not address equity or prioritize the needs of marginalized people. If Muni is going to build equitable transit in San Francisco, they need to include immediate as well as long-term improvements to existing services.

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Previous page : photo from @sfmta\_muni, "What Does an Effective, Equitable, and Resilient Transportation System for San Francisco's Future Look like? ConnectSF, Comprised of Staff...", Photo, December 2021, accessed May 9, 2022.

216 [The Online Bus Rapid Transit Planning Guide](#)

217 ["Transit-First Policy"](#)

218 Henderson, [Street Fight](#)

219 Jason Henderson, PhD (Professor, San Francisco State University), interview with the author, March 2, 2022.

## Pillar 2 : Connecting transit to other inequities in people’s lives

In a scathing critique of the planning process for Van Ness, Henderson cited the politicking between various city and county departments vying for control of different aspects of the project as a major barrier to connecting transit to bigger ideas like other inequities. Although there is a connection with private luxury transit,<sup>220</sup> the easiest thing to see for residents in particular, most observers usually only connected to issues of gentrification and displacement rather than to other issues.



Figure 27: A group of protesters surround a Google private shuttle bus in the Mission in 2013. The bus is blocking a Muni stop, and the sign that has been placed in front reads “Warning! Illegal use of public infrastructure.”

Photo by [Chris Martin / flickr](#). (CC BY 2.0)

As Advocacy Director of SFTR, Deutsch-Gross was part of a push to expand the study area beyond the mandated two-block radius that was used along the Geary corridor. By including crossing bus lines in impact studies, more residents, and riders whose routes do not necessarily start and end along Geary, Deutsch-Gross and SFTR hope to connect transit projects to the wider web of transit in the city. Although the freedom of movement and environmental benefits of a robust transit system were hinted at during the opening event for the Van Ness BRT, much of the benefit that these systems bring is focused on quantifiable economic factors. Connecting transit generally, and bus services more specifically, to other inequities is a longer and deeper conversation than was advanced around either of the San Francisco projects.

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220 Henderson, *Street Fight*

### **Pillar 3 : Addressing past transit decisions' harms**

Both Henderson and Deutsch-Gross agreed that the construction mess on Van Ness was a strike against the project, and was particularly visible to the public at large. Other communities are likely to see it as a warning sign that they do not want to have that happen in their neighborhoods. With the Geary project's ability to gain similar benefits from minimal disruption of side-running lanes and bus bulb-outs, there will be little impetus to build BRT or other major transit projects. None of this addresses past harms from Muni decisions, though, but rather provides a data point for future projects as everyone tries to avoid projects that will eventually be considered a "past harm."

The existence of four separate bus lines along Geary seem to me a clear indication of a need for improved and enhanced bus service along the route. These buses have been consistently packed both before and during the pandemic, although the 38AX and 38BX have been discontinued. There is a strong push happening among communities for Muni to restore full service to all lines (Figure 20 on page 59), which would definitely be the most equitable decision.

### **Pillar 4 : Measure equitable outcomes for people and neighborhoods**

The most information I was able to get about equity data was from Deutsch-Gross, along the Geary corridor. He was disappointed in the inability for SFMTA to collect such data, speculating that it was due to the lack of identified EPCs along the route. Either way, he was clear that agencies need to collect more data if outcomes are going to be measured for equity. The SFTR pushed for multilingual outreach for the Geary projects because the city agencies were working solely in English, as well as paper surveys to supplement digital outreach and help increase reach and gather more data; still, this was not really enough to be able to conduct meaningful analysis of equity outcomes. One interesting attempt that Muni made was to host a walking tour pilot due to COVID-19 in an attempt to reach a different audience.

### **Pillar 5 : Create processes for the most affected to exert meaningful influence over decisions**

In discussing getting affected community members involved in project planning, Henderson remarked that SFMTA and SFCTA considered bus riders "difficult to reach" and not united in the same way as merchants, so it was difficult to include their perspectives in the planning process. I find it hard to believe that a captive audience like people waiting for or on a bus presents any difficulty in reaching them, though the actual method of outreach would likely determine the efficacy. Many people are not interested in being approached on transit, and signage also seems hit-or-miss. Perhaps that is the aspect that makes them difficult – not to reach, but to get their feedback. Some agency outreach was conducted via signage and posters at bus stops, but the Round 1 outreach<sup>221</sup> was targeted at merchants near bus stops slated for changes, in addition to reaching possible riders at "events and food distribution centers." This outreach was also conducted after the Muni Board of Directors decided to make the temporary side-running transit

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221 Nguyen, [Geary Community Advisory Committee Meeting – January 12, 2022](#)

lanes permanent in July, 2020, which was supported by community members and bus operators.<sup>222</sup>

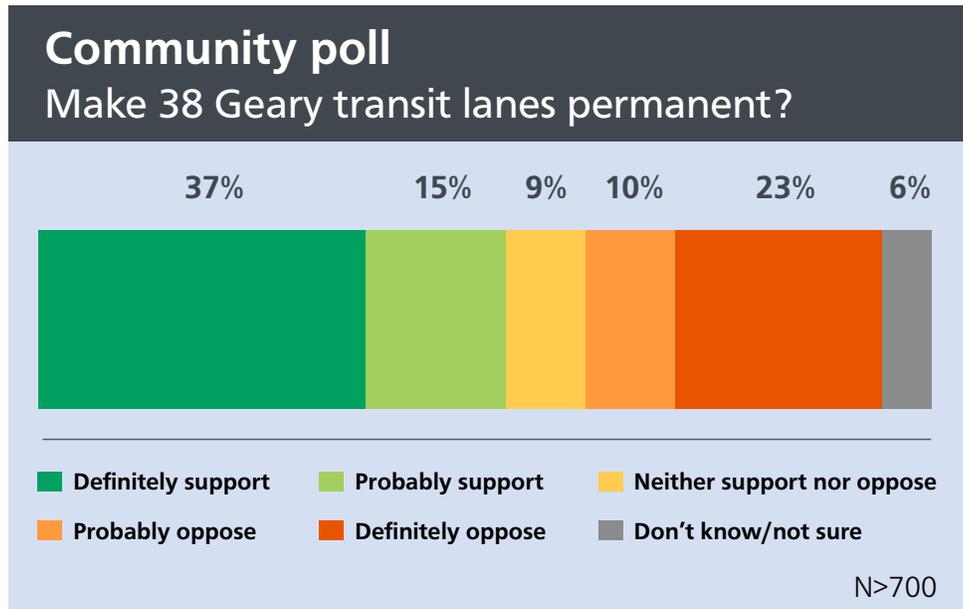


Figure 28: Results from a 2020 community poll conducted by SFMTA gauging support for making the temporary transit lanes along Geary permanent. The whole scorecard is in Appendix B on page 87. Source : Amy Fowler, “Geary Temporary Transit Lanes Approved to Become Permanent,” July 2021, Text, accessed November 23, 2021

Deutsch-Gross was not optimistic about the influence that community members had on any of the Geary projects, because “most of the input came solely from agencies.” Business owners were the next biggest voice in the process, so it is unsurprising that their concerns took precedent in plan adjustments. The little community feedback that did come in seemed heavily influenced by the trouble everyone was seeing with the Van Ness BRT project, resulting in many concerns about a similar negative construction impact to the street. Between that perceived low quality of project delivery, the ability to achieve the same results with less construction, and eventual subway plans, most of the resident and citizen feedback that Deutsch-Gross heard was against BRT.

For the Geary Rapid Project area, community input changes were specifically detailed and explained after many opportunities for community members to provide their feedback on a number of changes being proposed by the project. By laying out the specific changes that Muni was making to the plan in response to this feedback, they provided much more transparency into the process and showed how community members can have a direct influence on project details. However, this seems to have been a one-time occurrence in the summer of 2018, and it is unclear how much further influence community feedback is having on the Geary Rapid Project. There are also only five specific changes listed with no further information about feedback on

<sup>222</sup> Fowler, “Geary Temporary Transit Lanes Approved to Become Permanent”

other aspects of the project. While this is a hopeful move on the part of Muni, it would be great to see it implemented for all feedback sessions and at all stages of project development. Because public input processes come so late in the project planning timeline, it is difficult for citizens to have any meaningful control over project details.

## 7.6 Current Project Status – Van Ness and Geary

Now that the Van Ness BRT is open, there is only one more major transit project in process in San Francisco : the Central Subway line, which is due to open later in 2022. Once it does, though, what is next on the list for the SFMTA? There are no other major projects that are ready to break ground, and some advocates are afraid that the agency could lose momentum in improving transit across the city. However, according to Director Tumlin, Muni is applying lessons from the Van Ness project to the work along Geary and in other projects.<sup>223</sup> A month after the service was launched, there have been significant travel time reductions for both the BRT and 49 Van Ness buses, even though the agency is still working out details of timed lights which will allow buses to stop only at designated stops. There has also been a noticeable increase in both ridership and reliability in bus arrival times<sup>224</sup> both of which point in a positive direction for the project.

Geary is a notable example of how it can be easier to remove or cancel aspects of a project, in removing center lanes and other small changes to stops. However, it is difficult to know if outcomes for Geary would have been different if Van Ness construction had been smoother and if the Quick Build Program had not enabled easy installation of side-running lanes. All in all, it is clear that community members need to be involved in planning processes sooner. Current styles of feedback are based on legislative requirements for public engagement and notice, which happens after documents have been developed. Getting community input earlier in the process, when plans are still malleable, would create much more opportunity for community influence on the outcomes of transit projects.

San Francisco as a whole has been making moves towards equity measures as exemplified by the new Transportation Expenditure Plan that the SFCTA has released.<sup>225</sup> This plan details how the half-cent sales tax funds from Measure K are distributed, and contains a new section to explicitly fund planning in collaboration with EPCs. To show true commitment to any equity work, agencies and municipalities need to have to have funding sources like this to center equity, codifying their commitment to lending more weight to EPC voices, and making inroads on equity versus equality. In particular, the 2021 Expenditure Plan highlights specific metrics to track in EPCs :

- Accessibility for Low Mobility Individuals
- Transportation Costs

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<sup>223</sup> Sarah Wright, *No Joke: After Years of Delay, Van Ness BRT Opens to Fanfare*, April 2022, accessed April 4, 2022

<sup>224</sup> Keka Robinson-Luqman, *Board of Directors Meeting, May 3, 2022, Meeting Minutes*, March 2022, accessed May 5, 2022

<sup>225</sup> *New Transportation Expenditure Plan*, accessed April 20, 2022

- Health Outcomes
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety
- Travel Time and Job Accessibility
- Need for Robust Outreach *which is then broken into*
  - **Equity-focused listening sessions** where members of community-based organizations (CBOs) serving EPCs provide input on their transportation funding priorities and are compensated for taking the time to provide feedback.
  - **Focus groups** in Spanish, Chinese, and Russian to hear transportation funding priorities from monolingual communities and those that may not feel comfortable engaging in English language outreach.
  - **Town Halls** with a broader reach, providing an opportunity for anyone to provide input on priorities.
  - **Roadshow presentations** will be offered to organizations as an opportunity to provide feedback on the New Expenditure Plan. Staff will target community-based and neighborhood organizations in EPCs, but will also provide a presentation to any group that requests one.
  - **Online survey** will provide an opportunity for anyone to read through key information and provide input on priorities for the New Expenditure Plan. This and other online resources will be available in multiple languages.<sup>226</sup>

Combining these upcoming equity focus areas with multi-layered transit plans that address both immediate and long-term community goals could be a great new step for transportation projects in San Francisco. However, coming back to some of the other MJE principles, it is also crucial that community members have leadership and power in not just picking bus stops but also the overarching shape of transit plans that affect them. Some of the elements highlighted in the Expenditure Plan point to an understanding that transit cuts across other inequalities in people's lives like health outcomes and job access, but there is still no focus on how the agency will be addressing past harms. Considering that not all lines are in service, and that Muni does not yet have a plan for bringing them back,<sup>227</sup> some of those harms are not as far in the past as perhaps planners would like to think. The focus on outreach and outcomes within EPCs is a great start, but there is still more to do for Muni to become more equitable.

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<sup>226</sup> [New Transportation Expenditure Plan](#)

<sup>227</sup> Ricardo Cano, *One Month after Its Debut, This Is How S.F.'s Van Ness BRT Is Performing*, April 2022, chap. San Francisco, accessed April 30, 2022

*Across lines of race, class and gender, transportation has historically served to entrench white supremacy, patriarchy, and deepening wealth inequality. With an intersectional feminist analysis that confronts and addresses how systems of oppression influence and structure our mobility policies, it is possible for transportation to take on new forms, as a catalyst for transformation.*<sup>228</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

Breaking my project down into two core components, MJE and BRT implementation, I looked at current and past research into both of these areas in order to understand the multiple approaches to and history of MJE, and why this approach is needed in planning. I also wanted to ensure that I understood the background theory underpinning the frameworks that I am using to conduct my analysis of the community outreach around BRT systems in the Bay Area. It is critical that we understand the history and underpinnings of our perspectives if we are going to make positive change and progress towards justice and equity. If planners are able to embrace the interconnectedness of transportation needs in supporting all of our lives, my hope is that we can break down barriers in planning.

### 8.1 Recommendations and Next Steps

Drawing on the example of San Francisco's Central Subway, the timeline from design to opening does not meet any of the MJE guidelines. When first identified as a transit priority corridor in the late 1980s,<sup>229</sup> Third Street was a higher priority due to the same factors as EPCs today – environmental and social justice considerations in addition to population demographics. Both Van Ness and Geary were also identified as priorities in the same document, but due to Third Street's connection to Mission Bay and Bayview/Hunters Point developments, it was considered the highest priority. The first phase involved getting light rail set up along the route, which opened in 2007 to Bayview resident protests.<sup>230</sup> However, this was part of a plan from 2002<sup>231</sup> for the eventual subway tunnel and the LRT was both a stopgap and a demonstration project for ridership and usage numbers, similar to the Geary transit-only lanes today providing improved transit service while waiting for the completion of a more major project. However, the community that exists today along the Central Subway route is substantially different from what it was even when ground was first broken in 2010.<sup>232</sup>

Any community outreach conducted for that project is going to be out of date – one aspect of addressing the harm of past transit decisions has to have a component of timeliness. We as planners cannot hope to make improvements in the conditions of marginalized communities

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228 Regan F Patterson, *Gender, Climate and Transport in the United States*, technical report (Women's Environment and Development Organization, July 2021)

229 Robert Pierce, *Central Subway Project History*, Text, October 2017, accessed April 20, 2022

230 *Bayview Residents Want Bus Line Back*, July 2007, chap. Bay Area & State, accessed May 12, 2022

231 *SFMTA and the Central Subway*

232 Pierce, *Central Subway Project History*

if we are not using their feedback to make changes in a timely fashion. While much of the delay between planning and construction is bureaucratic and legislative, from CEQA challenges to public notice periods to the construction bidding process, we have to be making multi-layered plans rather than one-shots. The people our plans affect deserve change now, not in 20 years when they may or may not still be living there. Enacting plans in a timely manner also demonstrates respect for the time that it takes to give feedback on project plans. So, while the Geary project is no longer fully BRT, perhaps the quick-build measures are actually more equitable because they address the community's needs immediately rather than delaying any improvement until the larger project can be completed.

# APPENDICES

## A Definitions of Key Terms

- **BIPOC** – Black, Indigenous, People of Color; a term used in an effort to be inclusive to a broad spectrum of racial and ethnic groups that face historic and current marginalization<sup>233</sup>
- **bus rapid transit (BRT)** – Bus service comes in many forms, and BRT is situated at the inflection point between bus and light rail service. Much cheaper to implement, however, BRT has five specific elements : dedicated lanes, median alignment, pre-paid fares, level boarding, and intersection treatments that prevent cars from crossing the busway.<sup>234</sup> Another advantage to buses over light rail is the ability to re-route to keep the system moving in the event of disruption.
- **community** – any group of people using the same physical space, either at the same time (riding a specific bus) or not (using a crosswalk)
- **equality** – Equality is when resources are distributed equally; it ignores that many people are starting from unequal footing. Equity recognizes this and sends a majority of resources to those who have less currently, with the understanding that only the individuals or communities affected who can say what it is that they need. Sometimes this means that those in positions of privilege get nothing.<sup>235</sup> This report advocates for equity in service planning, based on a needs assessment generated by the community itself, to ensure that the voices of those who have been systematically under-served are now prioritized.
- **equity** – recognition of the institutional and systemic harm that certain groups experience more heavily than others, which also limits their access to the benefits of those institutions and systems; principles of equity move the resources of those systems towards those marginalized groups based on that history rather than continuing the status quo.<sup>236</sup> While there is not consensus on the definition of equity as it is practiced within transportation planning, ensuring that a definition is clearly spelled out for each process is crucial to building shared understanding and buy-in from all parties involved.<sup>237</sup>
- **Equity Priority Communities** – Formerly called “Communities of Concern” this designation by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) combines several factors, including race and age, to quantify specific needs in that community that are not present for other groups.<sup>238</sup> Based on census tract demographics, the first assessment of an Equity Priority Community is having a high concentration of both minority and low-income<sup>239</sup> households. Otherwise,

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233 *Transit Justice Principles* (New York: TransitCenter, September 22, 2021)

234 “What is BRT?”

235 Khanyi Mlaba, “Equity vs Equality: What’s the Difference?,” Global Citizen, March 19, 2021

236 *Transit Justice Principles*

237 McCullough and Erasmus, “Assessing the Impact of Equity Work in Transportation,” pg 8.

238 *Equity Priority Communities | Association of Bay Area Governments*

239 Low income is defined as less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). For how income and poverty level are calculated by the US Census Bureau, see US Census Bureau, *How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty*, accessed May 12, 2022

concentrations of low-income households in a census tract are combined with three of the following six factors : Limited English Proficiency, Zero-Vehicle Household, Seniors 75 and Over, People with Disability, Single-Parent Family, and Severely Rent-Burdened Household.<sup>240</sup>

- **justice** – the broader category that encompasses equity bringing in a moral component into the conversation in addition to issues of power, privilege, and politics.<sup>241</sup> It is the even more qualitative side of “equity metrics” that cannot be measured and is the larger goal of MJE work.<sup>242</sup> Moving beyond boundaries and metrics into the realm where community members’ lived experiences are regarded as equally valuable “data” when making decisions about planning projects, moving the power from administrators and the state to individuals, is how we get from mobility equity to mobility justice.
- **marginalization / people who have been marginalized** – both historic and present systemic exclusion or oppression of communities and individuals based on race, class, ability, sex, gender presentation, and other forms of discrimination; usually used in the context of institutions and systems rather than individual interactions.<sup>243</sup>
- **mobility** – the act of someone traveling from one place to another, where (in)equality can be discussed in terms of access to resources or physical ability though the former is more along the lines of (in)equality while the latter is more the focus of mobility within this report.<sup>244</sup>
- **mobility equity / mobility justice** (collectively, MJE) – There are many shades of definition but the one I like is encapsulated by the ideas of working together in coalition to ensure that everyone, especially those without access to private vehicles, have access to the same opportunities.<sup>245</sup> Other, broader definitions can be found in the introduction to Sheller, *Mobility Justice : The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes*.
- **social justice** – *Social justice means people from all identity groups have the same rights, opportunities, access to resources, and benefits. It acknowledges that historical inequalities exist and must be addressed and remedied through specific measures including advocacy to confront discrimination, oppression, and institutional inequalities, with a recognition that this process should be participatory, collaborative, inclusive of difference, and affirming of personal agency.*<sup>246</sup> – Although this definition comes from social work and is largely in the context of that work, it is broadly applicable to any justice work in any field.<sup>247</sup>

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240 MTC Plan Bay Area 2050 Communities of Concern, technical report (Bay Area Metro Center, November 2, 2020)

241 Pereira and Karner, “[Transportation Equity](#)”

242 Karner et al., “[From Transportation Equity to Transportation Justice](#)”

243 [Transit Justice Principles](#)

244 Hidayati, Tan, and Yamu, “[Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality](#)”

245 “[Mobility Justice](#)”

246 Brittanie Atteberry Ash, “Social Work, Social Justice, and the Causes to Which We Are Called: Attitudes, Ally Behavior, and Activism” (PhD diss., University of Denver), accessed March 6, 2022

247 For a detailed discussion of the history and theoretical frameworks for social justice see [Atteberry Ash](#) and Hidayati, Tan, and Yamu, “[Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality.](#)”

- **transit-dependent** – Anyone who relies on public transit for their mobility needs, regardless of vehicle ownership or access status. There is some contention around this term, particularly as it can be used as a stand-in for income and racial demographics, and can create a sense of separation between planners and the communities they plan for. Particularly expansive definitions of “transit dependent” help to illustrate the way that issues of transportation access cut across multiple disciplines and concerns, in that “we are all dependent on the people who are transit-dependent. So, we’re all transit-dependent.”<sup>248</sup>
- **zero vehicle household** – Households that do not have a personal vehicle registered to them.<sup>249</sup>

For a fuller list of terms and explanations, please see [Glossary of terms: Race, Equity and Social Justice](#).

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248 Andy Olin, “Want transportation equity? Be an accomplice, not an ally,” December 2020

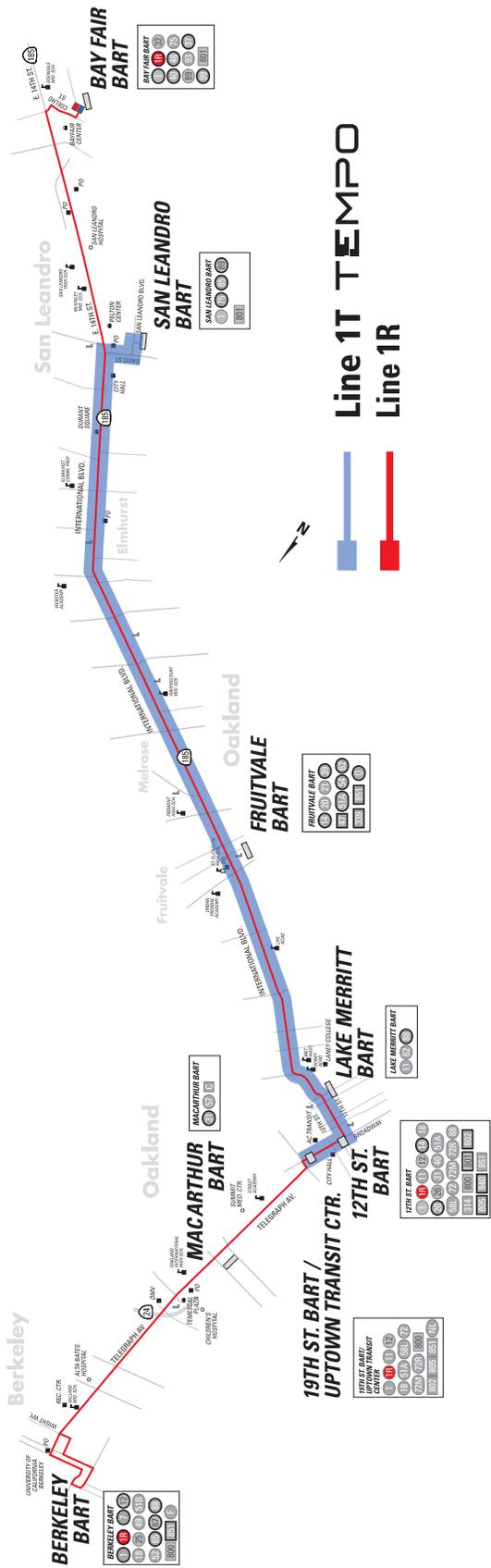
249 [MTC Plan Bay Area 2050 Communities of Concern](#)

## B Supplemental Figures

Full page of the Five Developmental Stages from *Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership*



Full map of the 1R and 1 Tempo routes. (Included as pdf for zoom capabilities.)



# SFMTA TREATS US AS FOOLS!

Our services haven't been restored because SFMTA remains understaffed & doesn't seem to be addressing it sufficiently. SFMTA continues to use this as a reason to delay service restorations. **We are tired of waiting!**



## RESTORE MUNI COALITION'S DEMANDS:

### RESTORATION OF ALL MUNI LINES.

Restore MUNI to 100% service with all lines restored to pre-pandemic levels & **a clearer timeline** on when they are to be restored while aggressively hiring, increasing incentives to entice more candidates, & speeding up the process for positions to help restore services!!! **BOTH SFMTA & CITY HALL NEED TO ADDRESS THIS TOGETHER NOW!!**

### DEVELOP IMPROVED OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION WITH SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

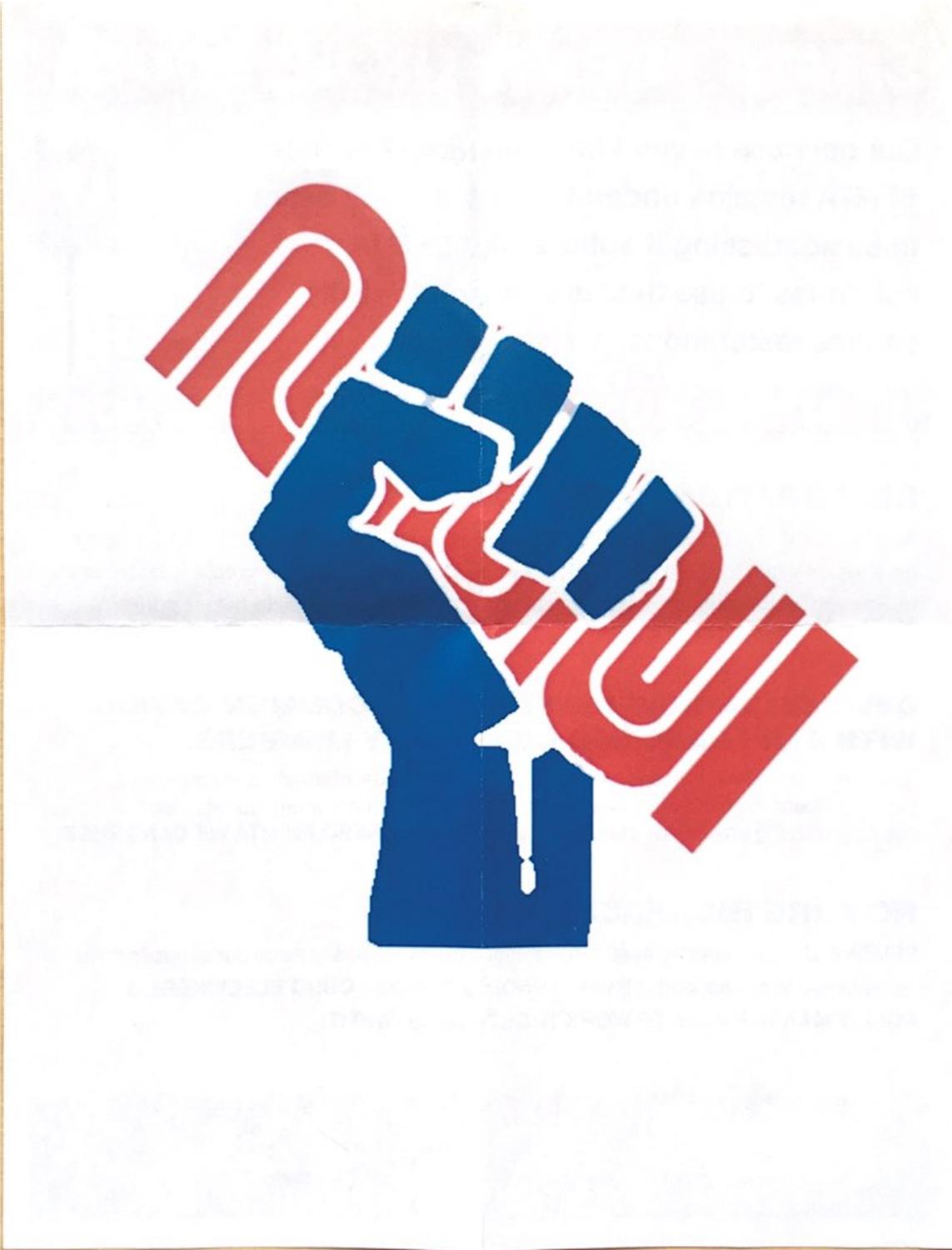
Determine community transportation needs through robust outreach & engagement based on clear metrics before when informing ridership of important updates and before proposing any further changes to services. **WE NEED AN MTA WE CAN TRUST!**

### NO FARE INCREASES.

SFMTA & City Hall need to ensure no fare increases; especially since our services have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. **FUNDING CAN BE FOUND ELSEWHERE & POLICY MAKERS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO FIND IT!**

JOIN A CITY-WIDE COALITION OF RIDERS FROM DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOODS TO GET OUR SERVICES BACK!  
FOR MORE INFO: [EQUITYWITHMUNI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:equitywithmuni@gmail.com)

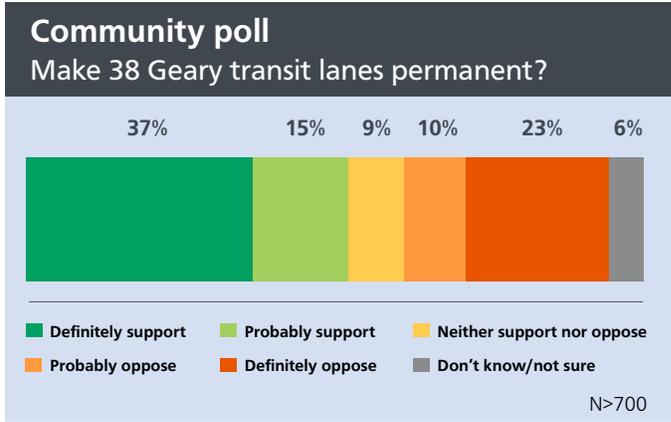
Restore Muni Coalition Flier – Back of flier



**Muni** Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes  
SPRING 2021



**Score Card: 38 Geary Transit Lanes in the Richmond**



**Shorter trips for Muni customers**

38/38R Geary travel times were up to 13% faster than pre-COVID levels after transit lanes were installed in spring 2021, even as traffic volumes began approaching pre-COVID levels.



**Number of daily Muni trips affected: 20,000 +**

**Transit lanes beneficiaries and equity**

- 38/38R Geary riders have household income <\$35,000
- 38/38R Geary riders are people of color
- 38/38R Geary operators say improvements make their job easier

**Minimal traffic impacts**

Change in peak-hour traffic speed, fall 2020 vs. spring 2021

Geary Boulevard	Control streets (25th Avenue, Arguello)	Parallel streets (Clement/Euclid, Anza, Balboa/Turk)
- 8% to -10%	- 6% to -9%	- 2% to - 4%

Peak-hour traffic speed reductions on Geary were similar to control streets, reflecting the citywide increase in traffic. Parallel streets had smaller speed reductions than Geary, indicating diversions to other streets are likely minimal.

Temporary emergency transit lanes and other transit improvements were installed along segments of Geary Boulevard in winter 2020-21 and evaluated in spring 2021.

**Contact Info:**

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Complete evaluation and sources at:

**SFMTA.com/TempLanes38**

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