

“E” Topic Area: _____ Equity**“E” Definition & Description of Subject**

Adapted from the FHWA: Pursuing Equity in Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning - Equity in transportation seeks fairness in mobility and accessibility to meet the needs of all community members. A central goal of transportation equity is to facilitate social and economic opportunities through equitable levels of access to affordable and reliable transportation options based on the needs of the populations being served, particularly populations that are traditionally underserved. Traditionally underserved groups include individuals in at least one of the following categories: low income, minority, elderly, limited English proficiency, or persons with disabilities. It is important to note that transportation equity does not mean allocating transportation resources in equal amounts to all people. Transportation equity relates to how transportation practitioners can provide access to affordable and reliable transportation (and specifically, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and programs) to fairly meet the needs of all community members, particularly traditionally underserved populations.

Current State**General Needs & Challenges Surrounding This “E” (for Ann Arbor)**

In transportation planning, we need to consider equity both with respect to mode and ability. One area of particular concern for equity is with the road network. Currently, road construction projects use "level of service" as a metric, which solely considers speed of automobile travel without giving any consideration to other uses. This can be cited as a reason to not add infrastructure for other uses (such as bike lanes or sidewalks) or not slow down traffic to improve pedestrian safety, without even taking those users into account. Disadvantaged socioeconomic groups as well as persons with disabilities are less likely to be able to drive or have access to a car, meaning that infrastructure that favors automobile travel disadvantages them. "Level of service" discounts human quality of life, especially for populations that rely on transit or active transportation.

At the same time, we don't have a comparable requirement for non-motorized access – for instance, the Washtenaw/Pittsfield intersection requires pedestrians to cross 3 times to get from the bus stop on the south side of the street to the north side. This provides a disadvantage to bus riders, many of whom are low-income, elderly or disabled (cannot drive), or school-age (too young to drive), and makes commuting both more difficult and dangerous for already-vulnerable populations. Traffic signals can also have the effect of favoring vehicular travel when a button must be pressed to activate the pedestrian cycle, as frequently this requires the pedestrian to wait longer. Finally, during construction projects, pedestrian access is frequently closed in places where vehicular access is maintained.

Another area where we see uneven treatment of road users based on mode is in road vs sidewalk construction and snow removal. While road construction and snow removal is taken care of by the City, sidewalk construction and snow removal is the responsibility of property owners. This leads to uneven conditions from property to property with respect to the presence of sidewalks and snow removal, and also makes it easier for vocal property owners to block

sidewalk construction due to the use of special assessments (and a requirement for property owner benefit).

Yet another area of particular concern comes with respect to land use policy. Outside of downtown, many developments are surrounded by surface parking. In most of these cases, these spots are necessary to fulfill parking minimums required by our zoning code. At the same time, we don't require/incentivize access for other modes of transportation in the same way.

Equity can also be a concern from the standpoint of demographics. For one, if improvements are proposed to transportation infrastructure, we need to ensure that these are distributed equitably among different neighborhoods. Also, transportation needs to serve the needs of all such groups equitably. One area of concern in this respect is with respect to transit – currently, AAATA service (except for more expensive NightRide) does not serve those working late night or holiday shifts, and service is heavily oriented around downtown/UM Hospital with the hub/spoke service model. This design, limited-hours and limited-service area, excludes people of low socio-economic status that work late shifts or commute to housing that is on the outskirts of the city but between major transit corridors (spokes). Also, traveling outside the service area can be difficult. While there are valid reasons for concentrating service on peak hours/destinations, more could be done to serve those who find themselves outside these.

Additional Considerations

Background Research

Relevant Existing City of Ann Arbor or State of Michigan Programs/Initiatives

- 1) Program: SnowBuddy
Strengths/benefits: Helps clear snow in participating neighborhoods.
Deficiencies/needs: Still relies on the general public for snow removal, currently only serves selected neighborhoods.
- 2) Program: NightRide/HolidayRide
Strengths/benefits: Provides shared-ride taxi service at a discounted rate when AAATA fixed-route services are unavailable.
Deficiencies/needs: Costs more than fixed-route service (and does not accept monthly passes), less predictable time-wise.
- 3) Program: Sidewalk Millage
Strengths/benefits: Covers sidewalk maintenance on a city-wide basis, without requiring special assessments.
Deficiencies/needs: Doesn't cover construction of new sidewalks or snow removal.

Programs/Initiatives in Other Cities/States (if applicable)

- 1) Program (Location): California SB 743 (<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/sb743.html>)
Strengths/benefits: Replaces level of service metric with alternative metrics (vehicle miles traveled).
Possible applicability to Ann Arbor: Could serve as a model as far as alternatives to level of service.
- 2) Program (Location): San Diego – Ordinance 21057 (<https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/programs/transportation/mobility/tpa>)

Strengths/benefits: Removes parking minimums for housing in Transit Priority Areas (areas in proximity to current/future frequent transit), instead requiring alternative transportation amenities to be offered.

Possible applicability to Ann Arbor: Could be a potential mode-neutral alternative to parking minimums.

Other Relevant Research (Strategies, Statistics, Etc.)

Next Steps

Questions to Consider

Performance measures used in transportation planning need take equity of mode/ability into account. Also, the process needs to account for all demographics and socioeconomic groups equitably.

Ideas – How to Improve This “E” (high-level policy targets, goals, metrics, innovations)

- Move to replace or augment level of service with a metric that is more neutral with respect to mode.
- Have the City take responsibility for construction and snow removal for sidewalks
- Operate traffic signals in a way that ensures all modes are treated neutrally.
- Take steps to ensure access is maintained during construction projects on an equitable basis with respect to mode if at all possible.
- Revise zoning codes to not require parking, or to allow other transportation amenities to be substituted in place of parking.
- Implement policy to ensure transportation improvements are implemented equitably across all neighborhoods, and communicate with AAATA with respect to service improvements.

What community stakeholders should be engaged in future discussions?

AAATA (for transit-related decisions), SnowBuddy (with respect to snow removal), stakeholders involved in transportation and land use Master Plan updates, disability advocacy organizations (Ann Arbor CIL, Commission on Disability Issues).