A Framework for Equity Outcomes in New Mobility

With new technologies and services emerging by the month, cities and governing bodies will need a framework for evaluating equity impacts. The framework below is a starting place that can be tailored to meet the needs of communities.

INCREASED ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY
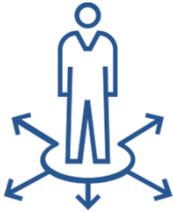
- ⇨ Does it overcome barriers (financial, cultural, technological, geographic) to accessing new mobility, so vulnerable populations actually benefit?
- ⇨ Does it improve, not impede, the movement of public transit?
- ⇨ Does it increase access to jobs, education, health care, and other destinations?
- ⇨ Does it reduce travel times for low-income households?
- ⇨ Does it prioritize the needs and trip patterns of vulnerable populations?

AFFORDABLE OPTIONS

- ⇨ Is the price low enough for low-income individuals to regularly use the service?
- ⇨ In instances where existing services such as bus lines are being cut, are there mechanisms to ensure that transportation costs don't increase for low-income households?
- ⇨ Is it likely to reduce transportation costs in the long run (e.g. by reducing the need for vehicle ownership or for parking in new developments)?

MORE HEALTHY & SAFE COMMUNITIES

- ⇨ Does it reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, both of which disproportionately burden low-income communities and people of color?
- ⇨ Does it serve people with disabilities, or people who walk or bike?
- ⇨ Are there policies in place to prevent discrimination or racially-biased policing?
- ⇨ Is it likely to improve health and reduce health disparities for vulnerable populations (e.g. by reducing crashes and fatalities or focusing vehicle electrification in impacted communities)?

REDUCED INCOME INEQUALITY & UNDEREMPLOYMENT

- ⇨ Does it increase employment with stable, well-paying jobs?
- ⇨ Does it create pathways for low-income individuals to enter the new mobility work force?
- ⇨ Are there policies in place to ensure fair treatment of the labor force (e.g. providing a living wage, ability to unionize, benefits, etc.)?[9]
- ⇨ Are we creating programs to train workers and replace jobs that will be lost with vehicle automation?

Recommendations to Prioritize Equity in New Mobility

The new mobility conversation has focused too much on technology and too little on human impact. We must humanize the role of emerging mobility technologies by addressing the current and historically unaddressed needs of those left out of transportation improvements. The following are recommendations for new mobility companies and the public sector to prioritize communities in most need of transportation options and those most impacted by climate pollution:

1   Authentically engage and respond to the needs of disadvantaged communities. Disadvantaged populations are currently not strongly engaged in issues of new mobility and have difficulty affording electric vehicles (EVs) or using the infrastructure for them. As the pace of change accelerates, it is critical to expand efforts to partner with disadvantaged communities in new mobility planning. These communities need to be part of the planning process as early as possible to ensure solutions respond to their needs and concerns.

2   Conduct equity demonstration projects. We need pilot projects that allow participation for those with limited access to credit and technological barriers, such as Chicago's new Ventra card and app. Ford GoBike in the Bay Area launched with a discounted low-income membership ($5 for the first year) that allows for cash payment, and includes an accessibility pilot to make adaptive bikes available to the disabled community. Every agency supporting new mobility programs should work to maximize uptake in neighborhoods that are either underserved or pollution-burdened by existing transportation systems.

3 **Give shared modes priority in planning and infrastructure.** Cities should give priority for public transit, high-occupancy vehicles and car share vehicles in urban areas. This includes designating curb space for shared vehicles and dedicating more traffic lanes to public transit and high occupancy vehicles on local streets and highways.

4 **Prioritize equitable service coverage to increase access to disadvantaged communities.** As cities and agencies approve and permit new mobility operations in the public right-of-way, they should set regulations and/or prices to support coverage in lower-income geographies. Where possible, they should support community benefits agreements between the community and new mobility companies, or otherwise foster a level of accountability so all people benefit from new mobility and no group is disadvantaged.

5 **Incorporate new mobility including potential benefits of shared AVs into long-term plans for housing and land use.** One of the most effective climate emissions reduction strategies is to create affordable housing near public transportation.[10] By further reducing vehicle ownership, new mobility can allow us to plan for less parking, which leaves more space and funding for homes and other beneficial uses. Transportation agencies should be incorporating potential benefits of technology in long term planning, including the possibility of fleets of autonomous vehicles operating on a network of express lanes on highways. Doing so could clarify the pathways to reduce demand for roadway expansion, as well as justify additional investments in public transportation and new mobility.

6 **Increase shared electric/zero emission vehicles in disadvantaged communities.** No groups should be excluded from using clean vehicle technology and infrastructure. Los Angeles's new shared mobility project that locates electric car share vehicles in underserved communities provides an important new model for increasing access to clean vehicles.[11]

7 **Plan for affordability.** As agencies re-examine transit routes and possible new mobility alternatives, they should ensure subsidy structures specifically account for low-income riders, and work to keep costs from increasing over current costs.

8 **Provide funding to scale equity projects.** Cities and transportation agencies should set aside funding specifically to scale successful models of equity in new mobility. The California Air Resources Board, for example, has an excellent program focused specifically on getting electric vehicle car sharing into disadvantaged communities.

9 **Create pathways to opportunity in the new mobility economy.** With automation there will inevitably be fewer driving jobs in the future. In the long term, we need specific pathways for low-income individuals to participate as workers with benefits in this new mobility economy, and to fund job training programs.

Endnotes

[9] Icons from Noun Project created by: Creative Stall, Alice Noir, Lorie Shaull, AlePio (in order of appearance).

[10] TransForm, CHPC, "Why Creating and Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit is a Highly Effective Climate Protection Strategy." 2014. http://www.transformca.org/transform-report/why-creating-and-preserving-affordable-homes-near-transit-highly-effective-climate

[11] City of Los Angeles. "Mayor Garcetti and State Leaders Launch Electric Vehicle Car Share Program For Disadvantaged Communities." June 2017. https://www.lamayor.org/mayor-garcetti-and-state-leaders-launch-electric-vehicle-car-share-program-disadvantaged-communities