King County Metro Policy Updates EIR

Integrating Equity and Aligning Major Policies Underlying Transit Service and Delivery

July 2021



Executive Summary

Metro is updating its adopted policies during 2020 and 2021, including:

* Strategic Plan for Public Transportation (Ordinance 18301)
* Service Guidelines (Ordinance 18301)
* Long-range Plan (Metro Connects) (Ordinance 18449)

These updates will help center Metro’s current practices and values including safety, equity, and sustainability.

In alignment with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, Metro conducted an Equity Impact Review (EIR) to help identify, evaluate, and communicate the potential impacts – both positive and negative – of the proposed updates.

This discussion below is organized according to the five phases of the EIR process:

Phase 1

Scope – Identify Who Will Be Affected

In Phase 1 Metro was asked to:

* Identify how your action will affect/serve people and places using demographic information. Consider, in particular, low-income populations, communities of color, and limited-English speaking residents, while also addressing reach, intensity, and duration.
* Identify the group of stakeholders and affected parties—including those who have historically *not* been/felt included or engaged—and their roles in decision-making.

Phase 1 Findings and Recommendations:

**Affected communities:** Because Metro’s guiding policies drive the department’s planning and operations, they impact all customers, including people who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color; people with low- or no-income; immigrants and refugees; people who are linguistically diverse; and people with disabilities. Metro staff will also be affected by the policy updates.

**Decision making:** After the updated policies are adopted, Metro staff will need to ensure their work aligns with the new guidance and may need to change some work practices. Tracking progress towards the metrics in Metro’s Strategic Plan will also guide decision-making.

**Address needs of priority populations:** Updated policies impact all customers and potential customers. As directed by the Mobility Framework, Metro updated its policies to focus on addressing the needs of priority populations, with a goal of improving prosperity for everyone.

**Increased focus on anti-racism and career development:** Specifically related to Metro’s workforce, the 2021 update to the policies included more of a focus on building an anti-racist organization, developing and supporting a diverse workforce that represents the communities Metro services, and ensuring employees or potential employees who identify as priority populations have access and opportunities to equitable career development.

Phase 2

Assess Equity and Community Context

In Phase 2 Metro was asked to:

* Learn about affected communities’, employees’, and/or stakeholders’ priorities and concerns.
* Know which determinants of equity will be affected by your intended outcomes, both directly and indirectly.
* Know how your proposed course of action will affect known disparities within relevant determinants.
* Identify potential unintended equity-related outcomes of this action.

Phase 2 Findings and Recommendations:

**Equity and Community Context:** Metro assessed the equity and community context through research, data analysis, and community engagement (as detailed in the Mobility Framework Policy Updates Engagement Summary).

**Ongoing engagement:** Moving forward, Metro will continue to coordinate the engagement conducted for the policy updates with priority populations and/or unserved/underserved communities through the Equity Cabinet.

Phase 3

Analyze and Decide

InPhase 3 Metro was asked to:

* Project or map out how key alternatives will affect community and employee priorities and concerns.
* Evaluate each alternative for who will be disproportionately burdened or benefit—now and in the future. How will alternative actions differ in improving or worsening current equity conditions?
* Include upstream alternatives (and related costs) that target root causes to eliminate disproportionate impact.
* Prioritize alternatives by equitable outcomes and reconcile with functional and fiscal policy drivers.

Phase 3 Findings and Recommendations:

**Community input drove many decisions** throughout the policy update process, including development of service growth methodologies in the Service Guidelines and network assumptions in Metro Connects.

Phase 4

Implement – Stay Connected with Communities and Employees

Phase 4 Metro was asked to:

* Based on earlier use of Community Engagement Guide, communicate with communities, stakeholders, and employees about how you will implement your action.
* Engage with affected communities and employees to guide successful implementation.
* Advance “pro-equity” opportunities when possible (e.g., contracting, hiring and promotion, materials sourcing).
* Measure and evaluate your intended outcomes in collaboration with affected communities. Are there sufficient monitoring and accountability systems to identify unintended consequences? How will course corrections be handled if unintended consequences are identified?

Phase 4 Findings and Recommendations:

**Policy updates were guided by stakeholders:** The Mobility Framework—co-created with the Equity Cabinet and informed by other stakeholders—guided the policy updates. Throughout the policy update process, Metro continued partnering with the Equity Cabinet and other stakeholders to gather input on scenarios and proposed updates.

**Metro will continue to focus on equity and engagement through implementation:** Metro will engage with the community as it implements updated policies through venues like the Equity Cabinet and community-based Mobility Boards.

Phase 5

Ongoing Learning – Listen, Adjust, and Co-Learn with Communities and Employees

In Phase 5 Metro was asked to:

* Evaluate whether your action appropriately responds to community priorities and concerns.
* Learn with the community to adjust your action as their priorities and concerns shift.
* Communicate progress to all stakeholders. Plan to include community feedback into future planning.

Phase 5 Findings and Recommendations

**Ongoing engagement:** If possible and as appropriate, Metro could engage community members in the development of updated plans and processes through venues like the Equity Cabinet and community-based Mobility Boards for service change projects.

**Ensure service is responsive to community needs:** Although Metro Connects is an important guide, engagement with communities will drive service changes to ensure service deployed best responds to community needs.

**Prioritize transparency:** Tracking and measuring progress through an online Strategic Plan dashboard will make Metro’s work more transparent to communities and provide the department with more timely data to adjust as work progresses.

**Focus on continuous improvement:** Metro staff working on policy and its implementation will coordinate with ongoing research efforts at Metro, many of which have a goal of socializing an approach at Metro that is more focused on continuous improvement in relation to community needs.

Conclusion

Metro is working to center equity in the process to update its adopted policies and in the resulting policies themselves. Metro has built upon the groundwork laid by the Mobility Framework and the Equity Cabinet to engage a broad and diverse group of stakeholders and communities. Moving forward, Metro will continue to look for ways to engage and empower stakeholders in ongoing decision making and operationalization of far-reaching policy documents.

Introduction

This report describes Metro’s Equity Impact Review (EIR) of policy updates to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, the Service Guidelines and Metro’s Long-Range Plan (Metro Connects). The report is organized into four sections. The Executive Summary provides an overview of the process and key outcomes. The Introduction offers background on Metro’s policy updates and King County’s Equity Impact Review tool. The Equity Impact Review section details Metro’s analysis and findings for each of the EIR process’ five phases. The conclusion summarizes findings and suggests next steps.

Policy updates

Metro is updating its adopted policies during 2020 and 2021, including:

* Strategic Plan for Public Transportation (Ordinance 18301)
* Service Guidelines (Ordinance 18301)
* Long-range Plan (Metro Connects) (Ordinance 18449)

These policy documents guide Metro’s planning and implementation of transit and mobility services. The King County Council adopted the King County Metro Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 (“Strategic Plan”) and the King County Metro Service Guidelines (“Service Guidelines”) in July 2011 and updated them in June 2016 through Ordinance 18301, following the recommendations of the regional transit task force in 2011 and the service guidelines task force in 2015, as well as input from the King County Council and Executive, jurisdictions, and riders.

The King County Council adopted Metro Connects, King County Metro’s long-range plan, in February 2017 through Ordinance 18449. It is a long-range transit service and capital plan that was developed with input from transportation stakeholders, the King County Council and Executive, jurisdictions, and riders.

The Strategic Plan, Service Guidelines, and Metro Connects, as adopted, build on the King County Strategic Plan 2010-2014, the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan 2016-2022, and the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan (last updated in 2020). They are also guided by the challenges Metro faces, including a growing and diversifying population, transportation challenges resulting from displacement, the worsening climate crisis, the need to integrate fixed-route transit with new mobility services and regional transportation partners, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for new, sustainable funding sources.

These policy documents are meant to be living documents, setting the policy for, and guiding the implementation of the Metro transit service and capital networks while responding to growth throughout the county. Since the Marine Division is now a part of Metro, King County Ferry District 2014-2018 Strategic Plan (Resolution FD2014-05)[[1]](#footnote-2) is also relevant. Rather than updating this plan, Metro will bring in language around marine into its other policies as appropriate.

Metro’s guiding policies were developed and adopted at different times. They are not fully consistent with each other, are outdated in some places, and no longer fully reflect Metro’s current practices, values (e.g., safety, equity, and sustainability), or policy goals, including the Mobility Framework and Metro’s Monthly Business Review (MBR) performance metrics. As such, Metro’s 2020-2021 update aims to center those values and better align each policy with the Mobility Framework and with each other.

Metro’s proposed approach is to organize the policy updates as three individual attachments into a single ordinance. Metro plans to work with the King County Executive to transmit the updated policies to the King County Council by July 29, 2021.

Metro’s policy updates progressed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes to people’s lives and to mobility systems during the pandemic reaffirmed how aligning policy with Metro’s core values is critical for the future. The pandemic illustrated the critical nature of Metro’s mobility services in supporting essential travel throughout the region. As such, Metro incorporated lessons learned from the pandemic into the updates, including:

* Adding more guidance on how Metro will plan for changes during emergencies
* Emphasizing a dual focus on equity and sustainability to serve customers with critical mobility.

The pandemic adds urgency to the need to update Metro policies to reflect the values and course for the future.

Overarching Goals

Metro’s goals for these updates are to:

* Incorporate recommendations from Metro’s Mobility Framework, including a much clearer focus on Metro’s core values of advancing equity, addressing climate change, and ensuring safety
* Align the policy documents with each other (i.e., to better deliver Metro Connects) and Metro’s current policies and practices
* Update outdated information (e.g., costs of Metro Connects)
* Streamline performance management

By updating these documents at the same time, and considering them together, not separately, Metro will be able to align them more effectively and consistently focus on equity throughout. For example, Metro and the county have a strategic goal of reducing single-occupancy vehicle car trips in King County, especially in consideration of the potential for climate change to have a disproportionate impact on priority populations. Metro Connects is the long-term plan for where and how service will be established to meet that goal. As part of Metro Connects, as updated by the Mobility Framework, Metro will target more investments to service in South King County which has both an increasingly higher percentage of low-income and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) individuals (due to displacement) and a lower level of transit service. The service guidelines will guide the operational and capital investments Metro makes to achieve those goals and inform Metro’s approach to evaluating tradeoffs, including engaging with the public when making major service changes.

Specific goals for updates to each policy are included below. Metro will engage the Equity Cabinet, Regional Transit Committee, King County Council, jurisdictional staff, community advocates, employers, transit partners, and other stakeholders in the policy update process. Metro will also engage internal subject matter experts. This EIR includes more detail about Metro’s engagement plan in later sections.

Goals of Strategic Plan Update

Metro’s Strategic Plan for Public Transportation articulates Metro’s vision and mission. It also outlines Metro’s goals, objectives, desired outcomes, strategies, and performance measures. The 2015 update to the Strategic Plan includes eight goals, such as safety, human potential, and service excellence. It also directs Metro to report on 68 performance measures through a Strategic Plan Progress Report, transmitted to the King County Council every two years.

Metro’s goals for updates to the Strategic Plan include:

* Update Metro’s vision and language regarding challenges the plan aims to address to align with those described in the Mobility Framework
* Align goals, strategies, and objectives with the Mobility Framework’s guiding principles and recommendations
* Include updated information on topics on which Metro has evolved since the 2015 update, such as Marine Division, climate goals, innovation, and the equitable transit-oriented communities policy
* Simplify performance measures, align with them policy drivers, and increase transparency by directing Metro to report on those measures through an online dashboard, as opposed to the Strategic Plan Progress Report

Goals of Service Guidelines Update

Metro uses its Service Guidelines to evaluate, design, and modify transit services to meet changing needs and to deliver efficient, high-quality service. The guidelines help Metro ensure that decision-making and recommendations to policy makers are objective, transparent, and aligned with the region’s goals for public transportation. Use of the guidelines fulfills Metro’s Strategic Plan Strategy 6.1.1[[2]](#footnote-3), “Manage the transit system through service guidelines and performance measures.”

The proposed updates to service guidelines do not change its fundamental purpose to establish criteria and processes that Metro uses to analyze and plan changes to the transit system. However, they do change the methodology to center Metro’s values. For example, instead of prioritizing equity last of the three factors Metro considers when growing service, Metro proposes to consider equity first.

Metro’s goals for updates to the Service Guidelines include:

* Provide simplicity, transparency, and stability to complex methodologies
* Align service growth assumptions with Metro Connects
* Incorporate Mobility Framework recommendations, including a stronger emphasis on advancing equity and addressing climate change
* Include updated information on topics on which Metro has evolved since the 2015 update, such as Marine Division, climate goals, innovation and flexible services, partnerships, and the connection between land use and transit

Goals of Metro Connects Update

Metro Connects is Metro’s adopted long-range plan, based on regional growth plans. It articulates how Metro can achieve the big-picture vision outlined in the Strategic Plan through a service and capital long-range plan. The 2021 update envisions 75 percent more service hours by 2050.

It also describes a vision of a reliable, frequent, all-day network that provides better access throughout the county, including for communities of color and low-income people, as well as a system that is integrated with Sound Transit’s expansion and is easy to use. Metro Connects describes the capital investments (e.g., bus bases and roadway investments) needed to support an expanded network, as well as how Metro may work with cities and others to achieve the vision.

Significant engagement with customers, bus drivers, cities, transit partners, businesses, and others informed the development of the 2017 version of Metro Connects. The 2021 update relied on engagement with stakeholders, including but not limited to the Equity Cabinet, Regional Transit Committee, jurisdictional staff, King County Council and council staff, community advocacy organizations, employers, and others. The inclusive process that led to this shared vision is a starting point for ongoing collaboration. Metro Connects lays the groundwork for next steps by establishing joint expectations for future road, land-use, service, and technology improvements, as well as policies that support the vision.

Metro’s goals for the 2020-21 updates to Metro Connects include:

* Making targeted revisions to the service network maps
	+ Updating the 2040 network to become a 2050 network, in alignment with Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC) Vision 2050
	+ Updating the 2025 network to be an interim network, tied to Sound Transit’s Ballard Link Expansion
	+ Updating the RapidRide network
	+ Making changes based on an equity gap analysis of the interim network
	+ Aligning the interim and 2050 networks with current planning
* Updating the costs, as required by King County Council Motion 15252
* Incorporating Mobility Framework recommendations, including a stronger emphasis on advancing equity and addressing climate change
* Updating sections to reflect Metro’s current policy direction and practices and adding new sections as needed (i.e., more information about electrification, incorporating Marine services)
* Clarifying expectations and opportunities for partners and how policy and engagement will shape implementation
* Updating language to acknowledge the COVID-19 pandemic and reflect Metro becoming a mobility agency

Related Initiatives

**Mobility Framework:** The Mobility Framework, responds to King County Council Motion 15253, is a driving force in Metro’s 2020-21 policy updates. In 2019, Metro co-created the Mobility Framework with the King County Mobility Equity Cabinet, a group of 23 leaders representing riders countywide, including priority populations. The Mobility Framework addresses several challenges:

* King County’s rapidly growing and diversifying population
* Transportation for households that have been displaced from cities to less-dense areas
* The worsening climate crisis
* The need to integrate traditional, fixed-route transit with new mobility services.

Responding to those challenges, the Mobility Framework articulates a vision for a regional, innovative, and integrated mobility network that is safe, equitable, and sustainable. It includes guiding principles and recommendations for achieving that vision, developed by analyzing changing demographics, travel trends and needs, best practices, emerging mobility technologies, and public input in partnership with the Equity Cabinet.

The Mobility Framework took a “targeted universalism” approach, consistent with Ordinance 16948 and King County’s Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, which defines targeted universalism as “defining outcomes for all, identifying obstacles faced by specific groups, and tailoring strategies and building on assets to address barriers.”[[3]](#footnote-4) Metro’s universal outcomes are captured in its mission to “provide the best possible public transportation services and improve regional mobility and quality of like in King County” and vision to “deliver a regional, innovative, and integrated mobility network that is safe, equitable, and sustainable.” The plan outlines how Metro will develop and enact targeted approaches and investments with and for communities with the greatest needs—priority populations. By making investments tailored to community needs, Metro can improve mobility and thereby priority populations’ access to the determinants of equity.

This approach is not meant to exclude people with identities that may fall outside these frames, such as LGBTQ+ people, youth, seniors, people who have been involved with the justice system, and others. Instead, targeted universalism acknowledges that identities are often intersectional (e.g., low-income youth or youth of color), and by developing focused strategies to benefit populations that have been most historically unserved/underserved, Metro can provide the greatest benefit for all.

The Mobility Framework also served as the foundation for the Metro-related guidance in King County’s proposed 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan.

**Regional Planning effort (Motion 15252):** In 2018, the King County Council passed Motion 15252, directing Metro to “prepare updated information to supplement Metro Connects to adjust for increased population growth, increasing regional congestion, inflation and construction costs, regional mobility needs, and innovations in transportation.” This motion inspired the updates to the Metro Connects.

Equity Impact Review Tool

In alignment with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, Metro used the Equity Impact Review (EIR) tool. This tool helps to identify, evaluate, and communicate the potential impact—both positive and negative—of a policy or program on equity. The discussion below of how Metro’s policy updates address equity and social justice refers to the following five phases of the EIR Process:

* Phase 1: Scope – Identify who will be affected
* Phase 2: Assess equity and community context
* Phase 3: Analysis and decision process
* Phase 4: Implement – Are you staying connected with communities and employees?
* Phase 5: Ongoing learning – Listen, adjust, and co-learn with communities and employees

Equity Impact Review

Phase 1: Scope – Identify Who Will Be Affected

Phase 1 of the EIR process identifies who will be affected by Metro’s policy updates and describes the scope and scale of that effect. Staff conducting this phase are asked to:

* Identify how your action will affect/serve people and places using demographic information. Consider, in particular, low-income populations, communities of color, and limited-English speaking residents. Address the following:
	+ Reach: which people and places will be affected by your action?
	+ Intensity: what effects, impacts, and/or outcomes will your action have on people and places?
	+ Duration: how long will the action have an effect in the short-, medium-, and/or long-term?
* Identify the group of stakeholders and affected parties—including those who have historically *not* been/felt included or engagement—and their roles in decision-making.

Phase 1 Analysis

To address this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

Explain how you identified the affected communities impacted by your project.

Metro worked with King County’s Office of Equity and Social Justice and the Equity Cabinet to understand which “priority populations” the Mobility Framework and subsequent policy updates should focus on. The groups mentioned in this EIR were chosen because of analyses showing they suffer from disproportionate negative impacts, as well as input from the Equity Cabinet regarding community needs.

People: What populations or groups will be affected by your project? Provide diagrams and additional detail as appropriate.

Since Metro’s guiding policies drive the department’s planning and operations, they impact all King County Metro customers.

As part of its commitment to using a targeted universalism approach to advancing equity, Metro is also focusing its update on ways to benefit priority populations, including people who are:

* Black, indigenous, and of color
* Low- and no-income
* Immigrants and refugees
* Linguistically diverse
* With disabilities

Places: What locations, areas, or geographies will be impacted by your project? Provide diagrams and additional detail as appropriate.

All locations in King County in the service area will be affected by the policy update. The policies determine how service will be developed and prioritized.

What effects, impacts, and/or outcomes will your action have on people and places?

The policy updates and implementation of the Mobility Framework will provide an opportunity to increase Metro’s provision of service in areas consistent with the direction of the Mobility Framework. This should build upon already-present considerations of equity that exists within the guidelines and should not reduce the weight or consideration of equity in any way.

Increasing the focus on equity and sustainability throughout the policy documents will also result in other benefits, including but not limited to, an increased focus on equity in how Metro prioritizes capital investments (e.g., speed and reliability improvements), as well as recruits and retains workers.

What effects will or could your action have on our priority populations (e.g., low-income populations, communities of color, native, immigrants and refugees, and limited-English speaking residents) and in what ways?

Focusing on priority populations in Metro’s policies will expectantly result in better service for and outreach toward those communities. For example, Metro’s methodology for growing the service network will incorporate data on the locations of priority populations and low-income jobs and prioritize equity in making growth decisions. Policy direction to more intentionally market products to and engage with priority populations should also improve how Metro works with those communities (e.g., targeted engagement, multilingual communications).

Reach: How will priority populations be affected by your action(s)?

Right now, Metro’s Service Guidelines prioritize service additions based on geographic value, then productivity, and then equity. The new policy framework will prioritize equity first and reframe equity to a larger view based on the Mobility Framework, which should increase the degree to which future investments are targeted to meet the needs of priority populations; this approach will also more clearly protect services to priority groups if reductions are needed. These changes result in increased focus on preserving or investing in service available to priority populations under service reduction or investment conditions, respectively.

Intensity: What effects, impacts, and/or outcomes will your action have on people and places?

The impacts of the changes will depend in part on the level of resources Metro has to invest. For example, with more sustainable funding, Metro can invest more to grow service, therefore improving service more for priority populations (and others). However, Metro hopes its updated policies will have a positive impact on priority populations even with more limited resources.

Duration: How long will the action have an effect (short-, medium-, and/or long-term)?

Updating Metro’s policies to better advance equity and focus on priority populations will have a long-term impact in that Metro will grow and make decisions in a way that prioritizes those populations. For example, if equity becomes the first priority in how Metro grows its network, it will have a big impact for as long as that methodology remains in the Service Guidelines. However, Metro’s lack of funding to grow the system will limit Metro’s ability to make an impact in the short- and medium-term.

Explain how affected communities and/or parties have been engaged with historically, and how you include them in your decision-making processes.

This project is in continuous engagement with the Equity Cabinet, which represents priority populations and riders countywide. They met about once per month through 2020 and the first half of 2021 to advance the policy updates.

Historically, which affected communities and/or parties have not been included, or been engaged, in similar decision-making processes? Why?

Metro regularly engages communities in King County with special focus on historically unserved/underserved populations in our service and capital related planning and programs. Centering voices historically unserved/underserved communities in the development of our policies is new for Metro. The most recent updates of the Service Guidelines in 2015 and the creation of Metro Connects in 2015 and 2016 were more centered around the voices of elected officials and jurisdictions. Pro-equity policies like the County’s ESJ Strategic Plan and leadership and growth of Metro’s engagement have helped establish and institutionalize equitable engagement that centered historically marginalized voices.

Explain how you identified your stakeholders. How are they similar to or different from your affected communities above?

Stakeholders engaged in the process represent the affected communities across King County, centering those that represent priority populations and including other partners and elected officials. Metro worked with the Department of Natural Resources and Parks to partner with the Equity Cabinet they had convened to create pro-equity policies for Open Space plans and programs. Several of the members chose to stay on the Equity Cabinet and Metro recruited additional members to ensure that all the priority populations and intersections of identities and experiences were represented at the table. Some were identified through existing relationships in communities, while others were identified by other Equity Cabinet members as key participants.

Identify the group of stakeholders, including how and why they have been historically, engaged with and included in your decision-making processes.

Groups we engaged with included the Equity Cabinet, which was recruited specifically for the purpose of the policy updates. Many members are leaders that, prior to this effort, we had not engaged but either worked on the Open Space Equity Cabinet previously or were recommended by Equity Cabinet members for the Metro Equity Cabinet as key leaders representing priority populations. This group had the highest level of influence in co-creating the Mobility Framework with us, reviewing proposed policy updates, and bringing new ideas for ways to address community priorities in the policy updates to ensure they are aligned with and advance the principles and recommendations of the Mobility Framework.

Metro also regularly convened a group of community advocates and leaders from community-based organizations who serve or advocate for the needs of priority populations and/or environmental justice, city staff through the Metro Connects Technical Advisory Committee, and a group of regional employers that received regular updates on the direction of the policy updates and had an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed updates.

Other standing groups like the King County Transit Advisory Commission, the Access Paratransit Advisory Committee, the Seattle Transportation Advisory Board received regular updates and opportunities to provide feedback on proposed updates.

A full list of these groups is available in the Public Engagement Report.

Historically, which stakeholder groups have not been or felt engaged with or included in your decision-making processes? Why?

Black, indigenous, and communities of color, immigrants and refugees, low- and no-income people, people with disabilities, and linguistically diverse stakeholders have felt left out of past processes, especially related to the development of our policies because they have not been prioritized as key stakeholders in the past.

Phase 1 Reflection

To reflect on this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

How did this process work well and what would you do differently?

The overall stakeholder agency process is strong. Metro built solid relationships with Equity Cabinet members, and the co-creative approach to developing the Mobility Framework and then using that as a basis for the policy updates resulted in a product that both Metro and the Equity Cabinet can be proud of. COVID-19 challenged this engagement in that Metro had to shift to an all-virtual engagement approach. It also complicated Metro’s message throughout the engagement because people understandably wanted to discuss different issues like pandemic recovery, in addition to policy.

In the future, Metro would work with stakeholders like the Equity Cabinet earlier in the process to identify the key areas in which they wanted to focus, to avoid stakeholders feeling overwhelmed by the number of concepts Metro is bringing to them. Metro would also continue working to improve and target its engagement messages and questions to each stakeholder group, to ensure it is bringing those topics of most interest and getting the most relevant feedback.

What did you learn in this process that you can bring into assessing community context?

We learned that partnering and empowering community requires leaving space and time for learning about community priorities that we may not have anticipated as a staff and working together to figure out how to address those priorities through the project or through other projects. Community-led processes require building in flexibility and welcoming and incorporating new ideas and priorities. Paying people for their time during engagement, in addition to providing support like food and childcare, allows for greater participation and for participants to provide a fuller perspective.

Phase 1 Findings and Recommendations

**Affected communities:** Since Metro’s guiding policies drive the department’s planning and operations, they impact all customers, including people who are Black, Indigenous and people of color; low- and no-income; immigrants and refugees; linguistically diverse; and people with disabilities. Metro staff will also be affected by the policy updates.

**Decision-making:** After the updated policies are adopted, Metro staff will need to develop implementation plans to ensure their work aligns with the new guidance. Tracking progress towards the metrics in Metro’s Strategic Plan will also guide decision-making.

**Address needs of priority populations:** Updated policies impact all customers and potential customers. As directed by the Mobility Framework, Metro updated its policies to focus on addressing the needs of priority populations, with a goal of improving prosperity for everyone. This approach aligns with King County’s emphasis of targeted universalism.

**Focus on anti-racism and career development:** Updated policies also impact all of Metro’s employees, as they will need to deliver on the updated policies. Specifically related to its policies on workforce, the 2021 update to the policies included a greater focus on building an anti-racist organization, developing and supporting a diverse workforce that represents the communities Metro services, and ensuring employees or potential employees who identify as priority populations have access and opportunities to equitable career development.

Phase 2: Assess Equity and Community Context

Phase 2 of the EIR process assesses equity and the community context. Staff conducting this phase are asked to:

* Learn about affected communities’, employees’, and/or stakeholders’ priorities and concerns.
* Know which determinants of equity will be affected by your intended outcomes – both directly and indirectly.
* Know how your proposed course of action will affect known disparities within relevant determinants.
* Identify potential unintended equity-related outcomes of this action.

Phase 2 Analysis

To address this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

Priorities and Concerns

How did you learn about affected communities’, employees’, and/or stakeholders’ priorities? What did you learn? Is there more to learn, and if so, how will you gather that information?

The policy updates are guided by the Mobility Framework that was co-created in partnership with the Equity Cabinet- a group of 23 community leaders from black, indigenous, and communities of color, low-income, linguistically diverse, immigrant and refugee, and disabled communities. They established and participated in writing a set of Guiding Principles and Recommendations for centering equity and sustainability in Metro’s policies. They also helped determine the types of data Metro should use to inform or analyze. Metro contracted with ECOSS, a community-based environmental justice organization working primarily in south King County, to conduct engagement with priority populations that informed the Equity Cabinet’s work. In addition, Metro held many workshops with community stakeholders, jurisdiction staff, and regional employers.

The Mobility Framework guided our priorities for the policy updates, and we continued working with the Equity Cabinet and convening the Community Advocate group and Regional Employers group, as well as regular check-ins with standing groups such as the King County Transit Advisory Commission, and later the Access Paratransit Advisory Group. The Equity Cabinet guided the work by identifying what topics were highest priorities to address. They also brought topics that were priorities to their communities for discussion and to found ways to address them in the policy updates. We learned about how service investments and growth as well as reductions need to prioritize equity especially looking at the data about essential riders during the pandemic as evidence about where needs are greatest. We learned about the needs of priority populations displaced to less dense areas throughout the county and how important it is to invest in infrastructure and services that support their access to the transit network and provide services at different times of day and more days of the week. We also learned about the importance of bringing communities in early and upstream to drive more equitable outcomes. Feedback like this shaped the policy updates, and there is much more to learn from these stakeholders and their communities as we move forward to implement the policy updates.

How did you learn about affected communities’, employees’, and/or stakeholders’ concerns? What did you learn? Is there more to learn, and if so, how will you gather that information?

The Equity Cabinet assisted in identifying concerns of priority populations with respect to transportation service. The analysis in the Mobility Framework showed that many priority populations were affected by displacement, which leads more people to live in areas farther from Metro routes. Metro learned that many of the people who most depend on transit reside in communities in South King County, which is an area where immigrants and refugees settle and where displaced communities of color now live. Yet, these communities are not served by transit as well as other communities either because it is difficult to access the service and/or the service is less frequent and requires multiple transfers to get to places of employment, education, and essential services. A second key theme is that people who depend on transit the most are less likely to work 8am-5pm office jobs and need service early in the morning, mid-day, or late at night. Metro’s service is focused on peak-period times and therefore does not meet the needs of lower-wage workers in King County. They will continue to be a resource as Metro gathers data on travel and housing trends across King County and responds to a changing service and budget environment.

Determinants of Equity

Which determinants of equity will be affected by your intended outcomes, both directly and indirectly?

Access to safe and efficient transportation.

What did you learn from affected communities about the root causes of inequities?

Communities of color have been displaced to, and immigrants and refugees are most likely to settle in more affordable and lower density communities in south King County that are not well served by transit, and Metro’s system is focused on peak-period service that is less likely to meet the mobility needs of lower-wage workers who need to travel early in the morning, mid-day, and late at night for work and education opportunities.

Unintended Outcomes

What are potential unintended equity-related outcomes of this action/effort? Please address populations (people) and geography (places).

Transit service is a system, and some changes may have system-wide benefits that provide important but indirect benefits to priority populations. For example, improving service in downtown areas and encouraging more people of all income levels to use public transit rather than single-occupancy vehicles may improve service frequency and reliability on routes that serve primarily priority populations. Conversely, there may be tradeoffs involved in expanding service to priority populations versus making improvements that will benefit the speed of the entire system.

How did you come to this conclusion?

Metro came to this conclusion through discussions with its Equity Cabinet, other stakeholders, and internal staff.

Phase 2 Reflection

To reflect on this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

How did this process work well and what would you do differently?

Direct engagement with the Equity Cabinet on the Service Guidelines updates was very helpful. They shaped the discussion of priority populations and how Metro measures and uses data. Some of that work shows in the policy updates but some is also affecting other analysis and planning work outside the policy updates. They also supported Metro’s methodology changes for centering equity in growth, reductions, and restructures, which helped validate those proposals for other stakeholders.

How well were you able to understand affected communities’ priorities and concerns?

Community members’ priorities were often very specific, and at times so specific that the policy discussion was not able to meet those concerns. For example, Metro heard a strong desire to incorporate many new types of data. While the discussion broadened out the understanding of what data we could use, Metro could not incorporate every piece of feedback because of issues with data availability, quality, and replicability over time. Metro may not have effectively addressed all concerns about data, though Metro did broaden the definition of equity within the guidelines in direct result of the community feedback.

What did you learn in this process that you can bring into equity analysis and decision-making?

Conversations and relationships take time. It cannot start with bringing a finished product to a group and asking them to provide feedback, but in spending time in development. This process was also a good reminder to consider proposals and choices from a customer perspective and get outside the “agency” box.

Phase 2 Findings and Recommendations

**Equity and Community Context:** Metro assessed the equity and community context through research, data analysis, and community engagement.

* **Research:** Metro and the supporting consultant team conducted research into travel trends and challenges facing King County residents, such as displacement, through the development of the Mobility Framework and under the Guidance of the Equity Cabinet. Those learnings are captured in the Mobility Framework report and the “Travel Trends” appendix. Metro built on those learnings and incorporated the Mobility Framework into its updated policies through the 2021 update process.
* **Data analysis:** Metro used quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate and develop pro-equity methodologies impacting the policy updates.
* **Community engagement:** Engagement with the Equity Cabinet and other stakeholders drove the policy update process. Incorporating Equity Cabinet’s vision, guiding principles and recommendations from the Mobility Framework into the updated policies was one of the primary goals of this update. The Equity Cabinet identified key challenges that Metro should address in its work, such as climate change and the increasing disparities by race and place, and those challenges informed the focus of Metro’s updates. Additionally, engagement with other stakeholders, such as community advocates, regional employers, and standing groups like the Transit Advisory Commission, Metro Connects Technical Advisory Commission, and the Access Paratransit Advisory Committee (started in 2021) helped guide Metro’s updates as well.

**Ongoing Engagement:** Moving forward, Metro will continue to coordinate the engagement conducted for the policy updates with priority populations as well as unserved/underserved communities through the Equity Cabinet.

Phase 3: Analyze and Decide

Phase 3 of the EIR process assesses how analyses and decision-making processes engage and benefit or burden communities. Staff conducting this phase are asked to:

* Project or map out how key alternatives will affect community and employee priorities and concerns.
* Evaluate each alternative for who will be disproportionately burdened or benefit, now and in the future. How will alternative actions differ in improving or worsening current equity conditions?
* Include upstream alternatives (and related costs) that target root causes to eliminate disproportionate impact.
* Prioritize alternatives by equitable outcomes and reconcile with functional and fiscal policy drivers.

Phase 3 Analysis

To address this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

Developing Alternatives

How did you—or how do you plan to—develop key alternatives and intended outcomes?

The policy framework will guide service-related decisions and assist Metro in prioritizing equitable outcomes. Metro will use the information and analysis developed in the Mobility Framework, engagement with affected communities, and the Equity Cabinet to ensure that equity considerations are incorporated into our service planning and delivery. Early work on the guidelines suggested that the ordering of priorities would be the most critical “lever” to change policies and so work focused on looking at different ordering of investments. At the same time, the need to align with Metro Connects presented several alternatives for looking at routes and corridors differently and considering different time frames. Metro considered a range of possibilities, outcomes, and technical ability to create different alternatives through this process.

Evaluating Alternatives

What did you learn—or how do you plan to learn—about how key alternatives address concerns and priorities of those most negatively affected in our priority populations?

Metro will engage more with the Equity Cabinet community-based organizations to determine how our proposed service changes address concerns and priorities of priority populations. The past framework for making investments did not provide a clear path towards Metro Connects. It also included but did not clearly prioritize equity. The alternatives developed were all intended to address those issues. We learned that defining equity was very time-consuming—with input from the Equity Cabinet, the Office of Equity and Social Justice, and internal and external stakeholders. Metro arrived at a clear definition, but it also needs to be an ongoing conversation because Metro’s understanding of equity will change over time. It was also somewhat difficult to translate fairly abstract policy ideas into work that felt productive or meaningful for discussion with priority populations.

What are the upstream alternatives that target root causes of identified inequities?

Metro considered four alternatives for prioritizing service investments. Each alternative was a variation of prioritizing by the scoring of the three factors utilized in the methodology (Equity, Land Use, Geographic Value). Metro is proposing to move forward with the order of Equity, Land Use, and then Geographic Value. Prioritizing equity intentionally and first can help address inequities by prioritizing new resources to areas where there are higher proportions of priority populations.

How does each alternative impact structural and institutional racism?

The need for more transit does not change between alternatives; but the order in which Metro makes investments is very critical to impact structural and institutional racism. In addition to updating the priority order in the guidelines, Metro aligned service growth with Metro Connects, and updated the Metro Connects interim network to address some key equity gaps.

The 2021 update to Metro Connects also included key changes to the interim service network to respond to an equity gap analysis and better service priority populations. The gap analysis identified households in areas of greatest need, as defined in the Mobility Framework, with limited access to transit service. Based on this analysis, Metro made several changes to the interim network in south King County to improve service to priority populations. Equity gaps were defined as areas with high proportions of priority populations that are farther than one-quarter mile from local service or one-half mile from frequent service.

The analysis found that if the interim network were in place today, it would improve access to frequent and local service for all households and priority populations. Priority populations would have relatively higher access than all households to both frequent and local service in the interim network—important because people at lower income levels may be less likely to own cars and more likely to depend on transit for mobility. Metro Connects and its associated technical reports include more information on this gap analysis.

The total of these changes reflects an attempt to remedy some of the past issues with Metro policies, though Metro recognizes that work will need to continue in the future.

How do you know?

When mapping the potential order of investments, the routes that rise to the top overlay well with the Areas of Unmet Need map work done for the mobility framework. The Equity Cabinet agrees that this methodology best advances equity.

Equity Evaluation Criteria

Explain the equity criteria you used (e.g., minimize negative impact, deliver increased services to underserved populations) to evaluate alternatives, and why.

Metro considers equity factors as established by the Mobility Framework, but with a specific weighting discussed with Equity Cabinet and the King County Office of Equity and Social Justice. The equity criteria also added information about where low- and medium-income jobs are located. Inclusion of these factors is designed to deliver increased services in areas with high proportions of priority populations, and/or high proportions of low- and medium-wage jobs. One example of this is the creation of the Opportunity Index Score, which helps set priorities for potential service growth or reductions. Each route, or potential route, is given an equity prioritization score, which is the average score of all equity priority areas that a route serves. This helps measure access to service, or opportunity for access, that a route provides for priority populations.

Describe value assigned to priorities and concerns of affected priority populations.

This project responds to the recommendation from the Equity Cabinet that Metro broaden the definition of equity and incorporate jobs access. Metro could not address every type of data the Equity Cabinet identified but made some progress.

Prioritizing Alternatives

What alternatives have been prioritized and included to eliminate disproportionate, negative impact on priority populations?

The proposed policies prioritize Equity among the three factors impacting prioritization. It also adds extra weight to low- and medium-wage jobs. Equity scores are also used in assessing service growth or reduction priorities, through the route-level Opportunity Index Score.

For low-income populations?

Low-income populations are a scoring factor of the equity score. Low-income jobs are included in the Land Use score

For communities of color?

Communities of color are included in the equity score.

For immigrants and refugees?

As a proxy, foreign-born people are included in the equity score.

For limited-English speaking residents?

Limited-English speaking residents are included in the equity score.

For other demographic populations?

People with disabilities are included in the equity score.

What role did functional, budget, and policy constraints play in prioritizing alternatives?

Metro did not suggest eliminating the three-part framework of Land Use/Productivity, Equity, and Geographic Value. That was seen as a fundamental part of the policies, and Metro had practical staffing and budget limitations to be able to consider more substantial changes as well.

Decision Process

What was (or is) your decision process?

Metro worked with the Equity Cabinet and other stakeholders to identify the scenario that would best align with goals of equity and sustainability.

How did input from affected communities and stakeholders from Phase 2 influence your decision process?

Input from affected communities helped Metro decide to propose the Equity-first scenario. There was concern from some elected officials and stakeholders who were not seeing their routes prioritized in the Equity-first scenario. Many of those stakeholders supported something closer to existing policies; or a Land Use/Productivity first scenario. Other stakeholders preferred Geographic Value as the second priority rather than Land Use/Productivity, because it placed their routes at a higher priority.

Metro balanced the feedback from many different stakeholders. Ultimately, there was enough support both from stakeholders and the Equity Cabinet to move forward with the Equity-first scenario and to keep Land Use/Productivity as the second priority to retain focus on addressing climate change.

How did (or could) equity influence decisions on allocations and/or investment of resources?

Using the Equity-first methodology will impact where Metro invests service resources first. Methodologies for crowding and reliability investments will also now include prioritization of equity as well.

What trade-offs were made and why?

Geographic value scores were “de-prioritized” as they do not align as well with goals of equity and sustainability.

What alternative(s) were chosen?

Metro is proposing the Equity, Land Use (Productivity), and Geographic Value priority order.

What are the equity impacts of this decision?

This places equity as the clear first priority while also valuing sustainability as the second priority.

Phase 3 Reflection

To reflect on this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

How did this process work well and what would you do differently?

The process was very intensive for staff supporting it- often put in a position of explaining very complicated technical information to elected officials or others. It worked very well to pair technical staff expertise with staff with policy expertise. It also worked to meet often and in smaller groups with people who had questions to ensure they could understand what proposals would mean when implemented.

The project was not resourced adequately within Metro from the beginning, and it felt like a constant struggle to keep up with what was needed. It would be much better to set up a larger group of people who could commit more time from the beginning of the project, rather than having to reset multiple times throughout the project to get the support that is really required.

How well were you able to incorporate affected communities’ priorities and concerns?

It worked very well to have the Equity Cabinet provide specific and direct feedback on the policies from the high-level to some of the detailed proposals**.**

What did you learn in this process that you can bring into implementation and ongoing learning?

Being transparent about goals up front was helpful, and the policy updates could not have moved forward the way they did without the foundational work done with the Mobility Framework.

Phase 3 Findings and Recommendations

**Community input drove many decisions** throughout the policy update process. Listed below are two examples of how Metro brought alternatives and/or information to stakeholders, and how feedback from those stakeholders informed decisions.

* Service Guidelines – service growth methodology: Metro brought several options for how Metro could prioritize the three factors it considers when growing service—equity, land use, and geographic value—to stakeholders for input in 2020. Given Metro’s focus on addressing equity and advancing climate change, Metro first recommended that we only consider scenarios that first considered equity or land use. The Equity Cabinet and others expressed support for the scenario order: equity, land use, geographic value. Metro then made a formal recommendation to the Regional Transit Committee and King County Council Mobility and Environment Committee that the policies include that proposed growth methodology.
* Metro Connects – equity gap analysis: Metro conducted an equity gap analysis on the Metro Connects interim network, with a goal of identifying households in areas of greatest need, as defined in the Mobility Framework, with limited access to transit service. Metro shared that information with the Equity Cabinet, Regional Transit Committee, Metro Connects Technical Advisory Committee, and other stakeholder groups. Metro also asked these groups how it should consider prioritizing gaps to make changes to address. Based on this analysis and community input, Metro made several changes to the interim network in south King County to improve service to priority populations.

Phase 4: Implement – Stay Connected with Communities and Employees

Phase 4 of the EIR process assesses implementation and how the policy update process will stay connected with communities and employees. Staff completing this phase are called upon to:

* Based on earlier use of Community Engagement Guide, communicate with communities, stakeholders, and employees about how you will implement your action.
* Engage with affected communities and employees to guide successful implementation.
* Advance “pro-equity” opportunities when possible (i.e., contracting, hiring and promotion, materials sourcing, etc.)
* Measure and evaluate your intended outcomes in collaboration with affected communities. Are there sufficient monitoring and accountability systems to identify unintended consequences? How will course corrections be handled if unintended consequences are identified?

Phase 4 Analysis

To address this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

Planning for Implementation

Based on earlier use of the Community Engagement Guide, describe your implementation timeline.

Implementation of three of Metro’s key policies will officially occur after their adoption, however work groups department wide have begun implementing new ways of working as guided by the Mobility Framework. This upstream work will have far reaching implications and outcomes. Metro also aims to track progress differently. As part of the policy updates, Metro is developing a public-facing Strategic Plan data dashboard and will continually update, review, track, and prioritize key continuous improvement areas to ensure Metro is making progress to achieve the outcomes and goals identified in the policy updates (informed by the Mobility Framework).

How did you—or do you plan to—stay engaged with affected communities and employees to guide successful implementation?

Metro will continue to engage with participants in pilot programs, with the Equity Cabinet, and with partners in the policy updates and measures developed in the Metro strategic plan to ensure Metro’s work serves communities. Metro will also explore new ways to engage stakeholders in upstream prioritization and planning, such as in the development of Metro’s internal business plans.

How are you communicating—or planning to communicate—with communities, stakeholders, and employees about how you will implement your action?

Metro plans to continue communicating with and engaging stakeholders involved in shaping the policy updates, as well as other communities and stakeholders. Metro will continue convening the Equity Cabinet and will communicate with other involved stakeholder groups and the public as the King County Council adopts and Metro implements the policy updates. Once the policies are adopted, the public-facing Strategic Plan will be a key tool in communicating about and showing our progress toward the outcomes.

Equity Impacts Measurement and Evaluation

Describe your equity impacts measuring and evaluation process—or plan—for your proposed action.

The updated performance measures in the Strategic Plan focus significantly more on equity impacts and outcomes. For example, Metro will track progress towards the outcome “priority populations have greater access to mobility products and services…” through an accessibility analysis that highlights areas of priority populations. The accessibility analysis is a measure of travel times using transit to connect to jobs, opportunities, and community assets (e.g., schools, grocery stores, places of worship, food banks).

How have you measured and evaluated your overall intended equity outcomes in collaboration with impacted communities?

Metro will continue to consult with the Equity Cabinet and conduct engagement with the priority populations involved in pilots, such as flexible service pilots.

What monitoring and accountability systems are there—or will there be—to identify unintended consequences?

By measuring progress towards outcomes for priority populations and all people in King County, the Strategic Plan dashboard will help identify unintended consequences. Metro will also explore other opportunities for monitoring and accountability.

How will course corrections be handled if unintended consequences are identified?

Depending on the stage of the project in which unintended consequences are identified, Metro will adjust design or implementation, or seek supplemental funding if unanticipated consequences for priority populations are identified.

Phase 4 Reflection

To reflect on this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

How did this process work well and what would you do differently?

Convening the Equity Cabinet was successful in bringing perspectives from priority populations to shape the policy updates. Given the wide range of topics covered in the policies, Metro surveyed the Equity Cabinet to identify the priority topics they wanted to be most closely involved in shaping, an approach that worked well. The pandemic, the national racial reckoning, local events like the West Seattle Bridge, and other major changes shifted the focus and capacity of community members and leaders to address basic issues like health, safety, housing, and food which reduced the amount of time and capacity for working on policy updates. It also brought to light many issues and Metro quickly realized the need to adjust its approach to allow more time and capacity for relevant discussions and find ways to include those concerns and topics into the policy updates.

How well were you able to be “pro-equity” with your opportunities?

Metro centered the Equity Cabinet in its engagement approach and the policy updates were driven by feedback from that group, community advocates, and other stakeholders. Metro also tried to track which engagement themes came from groups or stakeholders representing priority populations, to ensure extra consideration of that input, as is consistent with a targeted universalism approach.

What did you learn in this process that you can bring into ongoing learning?

Metro learned that true partnership means listening to community and being open to what topics and priorities are impacting communities and sharing power by making space for those conversations and letting that influence the direction of the work, even if they were not topics initially anticipated as part of the project.

Phase 4 Findings and Recommendations

**Policy updates were guided by stakeholders:** The Mobility Framework—co-created with the Equity Cabinet and informed by other stakeholders—guided the policy updates. After the King County Council adopted the summary of recommendations from the Mobility Framework, Metro continued partnering with the Equity Cabinet to review ideas and scenarios for key changes to the policy documents to determine how well they aligned with the guiding principles and recommendations within the Mobility Framework. The Equity Cabinet also brought their own issues and topics that they wanted to see were addressed at a policy level and those were tracked and addressed through the policy updates. Metro convened a group of community advocates and community-based organizations and a group of regional employers and met with existing groups like the Metro Connects Technical Advisory Committee of jurisdiction staff, the King County Transit Advisory Commission, the Access Paratransit Advisory Committee, and other existing groups to hold workshops and gather input on scenarios and proposed updates.

**Metro will continue to focus on equity and engagement through implementation:** Metro will continue to focus on equity and engage community as it works to implement its updated policies, especially after the King County Council adopts the final versions. For example, Metro is developing budget proposals with a focus on prioritizing investments where needs are greatest. Metro will engage with community as it implements updated policies through venues like the Equity Cabinet as well as community-based Mobility Boards. Metro is also exploring how to conduct more engagement as it develops its 10-year business plan, which would result in communities, especially priority populations, have an ongoing opportunity to co-learn and help shape/adjust priorities.

Phase 5: Ongoing Learning – Listen, Adjust, and Co-Learn with Communities and Employees

Phase 5 assesses how ongoing learning is being incorporated into the policy updates process, and how listening, adjusting, and co-learning with communities and employees will be addressed. Staff completing this phase are asked to:

* Evaluate whether your action appropriately responds to community priorities and concerns
* Learn with the community to adjust your action as their priorities and concerns shift
* Communicate progress to all stakeholders; plan to include community feedback into future planning

Phase 5 Analysis

To address this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

Ongoing Learning

Describe your plan to listen, adjust, and co-learn with affected communities and employees.

After the King County Council adopts updated policies, Metro staff will need to change their work to align with updated guidance. If possible and as appropriate, Metro could engage community members in the development of updated plans and processes through venues like the Equity Cabinet as well as community-based Mobility Boards for service change projects. Metro is also exploring how to conduct more engagement as it develops its 10-year business plan, which would result in communities, especially priority populations, have an ongoing opportunity to co-learn and help shape and adjust priorities.

Additionally, although Metro Connects is an important guide, engagement with communities will drive service changes to ensure service deployed best responds to community needs. Tracking and measuring progress through an online Strategic Plan dashboard will also help Metro be more transparent with communities and have more data, more quickly to adjust as work progresses. Lastly, Metro staff working on policy and its implementation will coordinate with various ongoing research efforts at Metro, many of which have a goal of socializing an approach at Metro that is more focused on continuous improvement in relation to community needs.

How will you evaluate whether your implemented actions add value to affected communities’ priorities and concerns? What metrics/KPIs will you use? How will you measure return on investment (ROI)?

The Strategic Plan dashboard, which will include approximately 30 measures, will be Metro’s main tool for evaluating how updated policies add value. The System Evaluation report will also help Metro understand the performance of and make decisions about its service investments.

How will you learn about changing priorities and concerns of affected communities?

Metro will continue to engage community and the Equity Cabinet throughout design, implementation, and evaluation of services, programs, and initiatives that align with Metro’s policies. The Guidelines also lay out a clear foundation for continued engagement with community about service changes, including major service restructures.

What will be your process to adjust your actions, in collaboration with affected communities? In other words, how will you ensure your performance improves over time?

Consistent with Metro’s approach to being a data-informed organization, Metro will use data in its Strategic Plan dashboard and monthly business reviews to make decisions and adjust actions over time. Metro will also continue engaging with the Equity Cabinet and other community stakeholders.

Describe your plan to communicate progress and challenges toward equity outcomes, particularly with affected communities, employees and/or stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan dashboard will be an important tool for communicating progress and challenges towards equity outcomes. Metro will explore opportunities to advertise and make the dashboard accessible to priority populations, such as having it available in multiple languages. Institutionalizing measurement of equity outcomes in both the Monthly Business Review and Strategic Plan will also help communicate progress and challenges to staff and elected officials.

Phase 5 Reflection

To reflect on this phase Metro responded to the following questions.

How did this process work well and what would you do differently?

Overall, the process of focusing updates on the adopted Mobility Framework recommendations and employing a stakeholder engagement approach that centered on the Equity Cabinet worked well. Surveying the Equity Cabinet to determine their top areas of interest helped focus Metro on key topics for input.

The COVID-19 pandemic made it challenging at times to focus discussion at a policy level. In the future, Metro may allow more time for stakeholder-driven discussions, both in the Equity Cabinet and in other venues like the community advocates workshop series. Metro would also work with stakeholders earlier in the engagement process to identify their top areas of interest so it would be easier to ensure Metro is seeking input on the topics that people most care about.

How well were you able to be “pro-equity” with your opportunities?

Centering the Equity Cabinet in our engagement approach and focusing on bringing the Mobility Framework recommendations into the methodology helped Metro be pro-equity in its policy proposals. Ultimately, whether or not the policies are adopted and how Metro implements them will most demonstrate if policy proposals have a pro-equity impact.

What did you learn in this process that you can bring into ongoing learning?

Metro will continue working to improve how it engages with communities, especially priority populations, in a co-creative and upstream way. Metro will also take its learnings about how to manage complicated engagement processes to keep people most engaged and get input on the topics in which people are most interested. Lastly, all the technical work to bring equity to the forefront of investment methodologies will provide a basis for making improvements to technical processes to advance equity in the future.

Phase 5 Findings and Recommendations

**Ongoing Engagement:** If possible and as appropriate, Metro could engage community members in the development of updated plans and processes through venues like the Equity Cabinet as well as community-based Mobility Boards for service change projects. Metro is also exploring how to conduct more engagement as it develops its 10-year business plan, which would result in communities (especially priority populations) have an ongoing opportunity to co-learn and help shape and adjust priorities.

**Ensure service is responsive to community needs:** Additionally, though Metro Connects is an important guide, engagement with communities will drive service changes to ensure service deployed responds to community needs including changing needs over time.

**Prioritize transparency:** Tracking and measuring progress through an online Strategic Plan dashboard will help Metro be more transparent with communities and have more data, more quickly to adjust as work progresses.

**Focus on continuous improvement:** Metro staff working on policy and its implementation will coordinate with various ongoing research efforts at Metro, many of which have a goal of socializing an approach at Metro that is more focused on continuous improvement in relation to community needs.

Conclusion

Metro is working to center equity in the process to update its adopted policies, and in the resulting policies themselves. Metro has built upon the groundwork laid by the Mobility Framework and the Equity Cabinet to engage a broad and diverse group of stakeholders and communities. Moving forward, Metro will continue to look for ways to engage and empower stakeholders in ongoing decision making and operationalization of far-reaching policy documents.

1. Note that the Ferry District Plan will not be updated. Instead, policies from that plan, as well as any new policies needed to reflect current Marine Division operations, will be incorporated into the other three policy documents. This structure reflects the fact that Marine services are no longer operated as part of a separate (Ferry District) government entity but are now part of Metro. As a result, this work does not include any changes to the Ferry District Strategic Plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This strategy is from the 2015 update to the Strategic Plan, but a similar strategy remains in the 2021 update. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/dnrp-directors-office/equity-social-justice/201609-ESJ-SP-FULL.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)