

**REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022**

SUBJECT Transportation Equity

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide the Transportation Committee with information on the implications of applying a robust equity lens to transportation priorities and seek direction on next steps.

BACKGROUND

On November 10, 2021, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board directed staff to report back to the Transportation Committee with implications of applying a robust equity lens to transportation priority implementation, advocacy and future planning.

Distinguishing equality and equity

Equality and equity are two different concepts for determining who has access to resources or opportunities. Equality emphasizes providing people with the same resources or opportunities to achieve a goal, regardless of their needs or circumstances. Equity recognizes that people may require different resources or opportunities to meet a goal as they have different needs and circumstances.

What does transportation equity mean?

Transportation is a public resource that helps people access what they need for their daily lives – things like goods, services, education, jobs and recreation. An equity lens helps identify who (dis)benefits from this resource and the resulting impacts. A growing body of academic and applied research shows that income, ability, gender identity, race and other factors determine these (dis)benefits, affecting transportation availability and choice. When planners, engineers and decision-makers do not consider these factors, people are impacted by not having the transportation they need. At the community level, the outcome is these impacts become barriers to affordable social, economic and recreation opportunities. An equitable transportation system recognizes that multiple factors affect transportation availability and seeks to overcome these barriers.

Equitable transportation requires both procedural and distributive equity. Procedural equity is the representation of multiple perspectives in decision-making. It means asking whose experiences or needs are over-or under-represented in transportation and taking steps to ensure that programs and infrastructure are proactively designed to meet these varied needs. Actions are at the governance and policy level and seek to avoid creating barriers in the first place.

Distributive equity enables social and spatial access to goods, services, amenities, and economic opportunities. It recognizes that transportation availability is affected both by where infrastructure is implemented and the different factors that make it (im)possible for people to use. Actions are at the program and infrastructure level and seek to reduce existing barriers.

CRD Current State

The CRD does not currently have an organization-wide equity policy. In relation to transportation, the CRD does take some distributive actions in seeking to address the needs of vulnerable road users. For example, the Ready Step Roll initiative reduces known safety barriers to travel for school-aged children and their families, the regional trail network considers the needs of people who use mobility devices, and Traffic Safety Commission education campaigns target outreach to seniors and youth to promote safe transportation options.

Localized quantitative and qualitative data related to equity is limited. Most readily available datasets relate to gender, health outcomes and income. Staff have previously used income data to produce the Housing and Transportation Cost Estimate Study. While equity impacts were not fully examined as part of the study, preliminary findings underscore that housing location directly impacts transportation cost. The study showed that transportation costs are lower in areas that are walkable, bikeable and readily served by transit. In the future, application of an equity lens could help better understand factors that determine residence location, mode choice and the impact on affordability. The CRD volunteer bike count program has observed a gender imbalance in active transportation. Knowing more about this imbalance from an equity perspective could inform mode shift efforts.

Next Steps

The CRD needs both procedural and distributive tools to make transportation more equitable through transportation priority implementation, advocacy and future planning. An equity lens would be a procedural tool to help integrate a greater number of perspectives in transportation policy work. In line with procedural equity, the first step to developing such a lens is to work in partnership with diverse and inclusive communities so that the lens is based on lived experience and reflects the needs of people who are often under-represented in transportation. The purpose of developing a lens would be to identify analytical criteria and policy decisions that could be made to promote fuller community access to affordable social, economic and recreation opportunities. The second step is to test out and apply the lens and take distributive actions. A pilot study, conducted in tandem with development of the equity lens, could help advance this work. The regional trail network would be the most appropriate focus for such a pilot as it is a transportation function that falls within CRD service authority.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board:

- 1) That staff be directed to work in partnership with the Community Social Planning Council to draft an equity lens to inform CRD transportation priority implementation, advocacy and future planning.
- 2) That staff be directed to work in partnership with the Community Social Planning Council on a pilot study to test the application of an equity lens by reviewing gender imbalance in active transportation, focusing on the CRD regional trail network.

Alternative 2

That the Transportation Equity report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Transportation Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

The proposed transportation equity work must be done with input from diverse and inclusive communities across the region. The Community Social Planning Council (CSPC) specializes in community-based engagement with groups whose needs are often under-represented (e.g., Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC); Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ+); seniors; people with disabilities; newcomers; women; low-income community members; and others). In addition to engagement, the CSPC administers the region's low-income transit program and is undertaking the Transportation Access, Climate and Economic Security (TACES) project. The District of Saanich is piloting an eBike subsidy initiative through the TACES project. Working in partnership with a respected organization that has established community links will ensure that lived experiences inform CRD transportation equity work. Without such a partnership, it would be very difficult for CRD staff to pursue equity work.

Environmental & Climate Implications

There are environmental and climate co-benefits and co-impacts to pursuing transportation equity. Prioritizing investment in active travel and transit creates more affordable transportation options and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed equity work could help reveal the interconnected impacts of this priority and identify the distributive actions needed to maximize affordable access to social, economic and recreation opportunities.

Intergovernmental Implications

The proposed transportation equity work could inform CRD service design and delivery. Should there be interest, this work could support municipal, agency and senior government partners. Additionally, the proposed lens is not intended to supersede or replace ongoing reconciliation efforts with First Nations.

The Province is currently developing anti-racism data legislation with the objective of better identifying existing gaps and creating more inclusive, equitable outcomes. The work focuses on a regulatory framework for data collection, analysis and policy design. Future provincial legislation could increase the availability of quantitative data. It should also be noted that the Province supports several targeted transportation equity programs, such as reduced-cost or free bus passes for low-income seniors, people receiving disability assistance and children aged 12 and under. CRD staff are currently working through the Transportation Working Group to baseline what efforts are being undertaken locally.

Service Delivery Implications

The CRD is responsible for regional transportation planning, regional trails and transit and transportation on Salt Spring Island. The proposed equity work could inform these services once an equity lens is developed and appropriate policy direction is given.

As noted above, there is limited quantitative data for BC and a lack of qualitative data on diverse and inclusive lived experiences at a local level. The proposed partnership with the CSPC would provide staff with access to qualitative data and expertise to support longer-term improvements to the regional transportation data collection and analysis program, once provincial anti-racism data legislation is in place.

Financial Implications

The proposed equity work can be done within the existing core budget, with CRD providing in-kind support to CSPC at no additional program cost. Any implementation actions resulting from the application of an equity lens may result in incremental service delivery costs or new initiatives. The proposed pilot project provides an opportunity to scope such costs. Any additional costs would be raised through the service and financial planning process, based on the outcomes of the equity work.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The CRD is responsible for a number of services whose operation and delivery result in co-benefits and co-impacts that affect transportation equity. Equity is interconnected with service delivery and is a critical component of regional livability. At a regional scale, policy decisions related to housing and climate have the most significant potential to realize equity benefits. For example, locating affordable housing in walkable, bikeable and transit-accessible environments can significantly increase access to social, economic and recreation opportunities without making new transportation investments.

CONCLUSION

Income, ability, gender, race and other factors play a significant role in determining who (dis)benefits from transportation. Transportation equity recognizes the impacts these (dis)benefits can have on a community's livability in terms of affordable access to social, economic and recreation opportunities. The CRD needs both procedural and distributive tools to integrate the lived experiences of diverse and inclusive communities into transportation priority implementation, advocacy and future planning. Staff propose working in partnership with the community to develop an equity lens to support decision-making and undertake a pilot study to understand gender imbalance in active transportation better. The outcome of this work would be policy direction to inform equity actions relevant to CRD transportation initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board:

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