



PRACTICES AND INSPIRATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY

Case studies from Canadian cities

INTERACT
INTERVENTIONS, EQUITY, RESEARCH,
AND ACTION IN CITIES TEAM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by people who live, work, and play on the traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island. We are grateful to our hosts for access to these lands and strive to honour their histories, culture, and wisdom in our work towards healthier and more equitable communities.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the transportation and equity practitioners who spoke to us throughout this project, in particular staff and representatives from our three case study cities: Mike Anderson, Tom Crowley, Dr. Shewkar Ibrahim, Emmett Proulx, Inge Roosendaal, and a number of others from the cities of New Westminster, Edmonton, and Ottawa. Their rich experience and insights form the basis of this report.

Thank you to the Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals (CARSP) and our case city representatives—Lisa Leblanc, Nathan Smith, Deborah Lightman, and Sawsan Al-Refaei—for their support in delivering our workshop at the ITE Canada/CARSP 2023 Joint Conference in Winnipeg, *'From rhetoric to reality: Promising practices for advancing transportation equity in Canadian cities.'*

Suggested citation:

Williams T, Sones M, Poirier Stephens Z, Fischer J, Barr V, Winters M. Practices and inspiration for sustainable transportation equity: Case studies from Canadian cities. Interventions, Equity, Research, and Action in Cities Team. 2023.

Funding for this project was provided by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Mitacs.

INTERACT



CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2	Additional city spotlights	40
About our team	4	Exploring equity across scales: Toronto, Ontario	40
Executive summary	6	Leading with local: County of Kings, Nova Scotia.....	41
Introduction	11	Harnessing data to drive change: Oakland, California	41
Background	11	Centring community through co-creation: Seattle, Washington.....	42
Project objectives.....	11	Legislating equity into decision-making: Washington, DC.....	42
Defining transportation equity.....	12	Part 3 – Summary of promising practices	43
Reconciliation & transportation	15	Part 4 – Moving forward	46
Purpose of the report	17	Conclusion	48
Who is this report for?.....	17	Appendices	49
How is the report organized?.....	17	Interview guide	49
Three ways to read the report.....	17	Longlist of equity policies	51
Methodology	18	Glossary	52
Part 1 – Equity policy scan	20	References	55
Part 2 – Case studies	24	Positionality statements	57
Case Study 1: NEW WESTMINSTER.....	24		
Case Study 2: EDMONTON	30		
Case Study 3: OTTAWA	35		

ABOUT OUR TEAM

This report is a joint effort of the Interventions, Equity, Research, and Action in Cities Team (INTERACT) and LevelUp Planning.

INTERACT is a pan-Canadian collaboration of scientists, city builders, community partners, and residents studying the design of healthy cities. Established in 2017, INTERACT's research program addresses the urgent need for better evidence, generated by and for communities, that can guide local action towards healthier and more equitable cities in Canada.

LevelUp Planning is a multidisciplinary, women-owned consulting collaborative. LevelUp has worked with several municipalities in Canada to integrate equity into their day-to-day planning work, through the development of overarching equity frameworks, the use of equity-specific data, and through equity-focused community engagement processes.

In 2022, INTERACT launched the Knowledge Hub, a space for practitioners and researchers to connect around the successes and

struggles involved in designing cities that promote health and equity. The Hub's goal is to strengthen connections and knowledge exchange across INTERACT's network of city partners, national partners, urban academics, and research trainees. The Knowledge Hub came together in response to what we heard from our partners: opportunities are rare for city builders to look outside of their own jurisdictions and disciplines, share wins, and learn about new research and practice.

In its first year, the INTERACT Knowledge Hub teamed up with LevelUp Planning to tackle a tough but vital question: *how can cities advance the vision of sustainable transportation equity from rhetoric to reality?* We delved deeply into the state of equity policies in Canadian cities, looked for jurisdictions making notable progress in their journey towards sustainable transportation equity, and interviewed staff on the front lines of this work to uncover what worked, what failed, and why. This report and the case studies within it reflect what we found and heard. The perspectives and experiences shared with us were rich, but no one we spoke

to felt like they had all the answers. Equity work is challenging. It requires many of us to think and act in new and different ways, and ask uncomfortable questions about implicit bias and power differentials in and outside our institutions. As educated researchers, we also bring a privileged perspective to this work and have limited lived experience with transportation barriers.

With these considerations in mind, we offer this report not as an instruction manual, but rather as inspiration for practitioners considering how they can apply equity to their own work. Future work should seek to understand these promising practices from the perspectives of community members whose lives are impacted by municipal actions, especially those from structurally marginalized groups.

To learn more about the researchers that contributed to this report, read our [positionality statements](#) on page 57. For more information about our work, visit us online at teaminteract.ca and levelupplanning.ca.

RESEARCHERS

Meghan Winters, PhD

Principal Investigator
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University
CIHR/PHAC Applied Public Health Research Chair

Tessa Williams, MSc(c), RPP

Research lead + Mitacs Intern
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University

Meridith Sones, MPH, PhD(c)

Co-investigator + INTERACT Knowledge Mobilization Manager
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University

Victoria Barr, PhD

Consultant + Mitacs Partner
LevelUp Planning Collaborative

Zoé Poirier Stephens, MUP

INTERACT Research Manager
Université de Montréal

Jaimy Fischer, PhD

Co-investigator
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University

Daniel Fuller, PhD

Co-investigator
University of Saskatchewan

Yan Kestens, PhD

Co-investigator
Centre de recherche en santé publique, Université de Montréal

Kevin Manaugh, PhD

Co-investigator
Department of Geography and Bieler School of Environment, McGill University

CITY BUILDERS

Sarah Webb

Assistant Director, Corporate Planning & Strategic Project Support
City of Victoria

Mike Van der Laan

Transportation Planner
City of Victoria

Sherwood Plant

Transportation Engineer
City of Vancouver

Bartek Komorowski

Conseiller en aménagement - Chef d'équipe
City of Montreal

Chris Schulz

Planning Project Services Manager
City of Saskatoon

Rob Dudiak

Special Project Manager (BRT)
City of Saskatoon

Gregory Spencer

Director of Research
Canadian Urban Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Almost 1 million Canadians experience transportation poverty, meaning they face limitations in accessing opportunities due to inadequate, unaffordable, or unsafe travel options. These barriers hinder people's access to essential resources like jobs, education, healthcare, and social activities, and ultimately affect their overall health and well-being. This issue is a result of longstanding inequitable planning and practices in transportation systems.

The big question facing the transportation community is no longer whether to take action towards transportation equity, but *how*. INTERACT and LevelUp Planning have come together to tackle this vital question and assemble practical guidance and inspiration on how equity can be meaningfully embedded in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of sustainable transportation interventions. Specifically, we set out to:

1. **Examine the state of equity policies** in Canadian and international cities;
2. **Capture lessons learned** and strategies for applying equity policies and principles in the context of sustainable transportation;
3. **Convene the transportation community** to learn from inspiring practices and explore bold ideas for advancing sustainable transportation equity.


This report shares what we learned and heard throughout our process, which included a mix of crowdsourcing, document analysis, key informant interviews with staff and consultants in a selection of case study cities, and dialogue with transportation professionals at a workshop hosted at the ITE Canada/CARSP 2023 Joint Conference ([READ MORE](#) about our methodology on page 18). The policy considerations, case studies, and promising practices found within the report are designed to guide and inspire the transportation community—including planners, engineers, consultants, advocates, or decision-makers working across various sectors—to embed equity principles into their everyday work.

What is transportation equity?

Transportation equity is about seeking fairness in transportation systems. It encompasses the fair distribution of transportation resources, inclusive participation in decision-making processes, and recognition of the prevailing injustices that shape different levels of need and power within transportation systems. During our review of municipal equity policies and dialogue with transportation practitioners across Canada, we listened for how transportation equity is defined in policy and practice and picked up on **five key elements** that apply across contexts:

Equity is...


- (1) not the same as equality;
- (2) about people;
- (3) intersectional;
- (4) about processes and outcomes;
- (5) linked to systems of power.

 [READ MORE](#) about key elements of transportation equity on page 12.

Equity policy scan

To better understand emerging patterns and opportunities in this evolving area, we reviewed and analyzed publicly available equity policies from eight Canadian cities: Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. Based on our analysis, we identified **ten considerations for the development of municipal equity policies**:

1. Start with a clear vision for systemic change
2. Ground the approach in local context
3. Centre diverse voices
4. Think critically about language
5. Apply an intersectional approach
6. Audit status quo for opportunities to improve
7. Adopt tools to evaluate equity impacts
8. Create structures for accountability
9. Establish baseline and monitor impacts
10. Embrace a learning mindset

 Equity work can support but not replace reconciliation efforts. [READ MORE](#) on page 15.



Promising practices for embedding equity in sustainable transportation interventions

Grounded in the lessons from our case studies and broader dialogue with transportation practitioners, we uncovered 15 promising practices for embedding equity in different aspects of sustainable transportation interventions, from policy and planning through to implementation and evaluation:

1  Formalize a city-wide commitment to equity in municipal policies, plans, and strategies.	2  Integrate equity in transportation-specific policies and plans.	3  Establish a clear vision for what equity means for transportation.	4  Mandate systematic equity analysis as part of any municipal decision.	5  Tap into varied data to identify equity needs.
6  Apply an intersectional approach.	7  Support equity analyses with staff resources and data.	8  Embed equity specialists within work teams.	9  Convene advisory committees that include representation from structurally marginalized communities.	10  Rethink public engagement to reach under-engaged groups.
11  Remove barriers to community engagement.	12  Prioritize resource allocation in neighbourhoods that need them most.	13  Support continuous learning across the organization.	14  Learn from experimentation.	15  Audit status quo for opportunities to improve.



POLICY AND STRATEGY



ANALYSIS AND REPORTING



ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION



PRIORITIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION



LEARNING AND EVALUATION



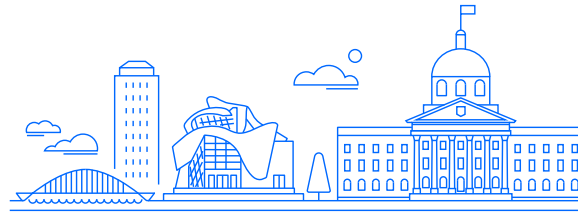
Case Study Snapshot: **NEW WESTMINSTER**

New Westminister embedded equity in transportation by starting to tackle barriers to engagement and making efforts to reach under-engaged groups. We heard that New Westminister has a culture where all levels of the organization speak openly about equity impacts of city work, though sometimes there is uncertainty about how to translate discussions into action. As the city works to increase their sustainable mode share, staff worked with an internal engagement specialist and consultants to design more inclusive engagement activities. They experimented with different formats and venues, with the goal of hearing from a greater cross-section of the community, especially groups that are not typically captured in open houses.

“I think we’re getting much better at...**identifying communities that don’t normally come out**, that don’t normally talk to us, don’t have the privilege of knowledge, time, childcare, to go to an event. **We need to go to them.**”

Staff, New Westminister

 [READ MORE](#) on page 24



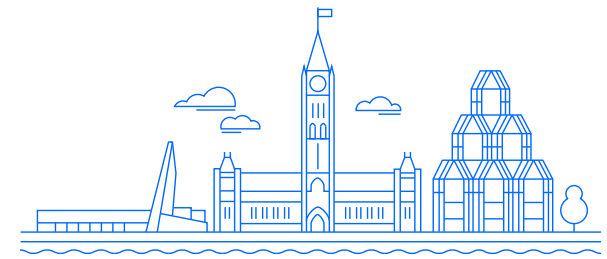
Case Study Snapshot: **EDMONTON**

For Edmonton, a pivotal moment was the mandating of systematic equity analysis for all municipal decisions in 2019, using Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+). This mandate normalized equity conversations as an integral part of staff work. Though staff were at times challenged in applying GBA+, the city offered learning opportunities to support them. The GBA+ tool and training created conditions for staff to come up with their own ideas based on their role, project, and community context to act towards transportation equity. Edmonton also used equity analysis to identify needs for their Safe Mobility Strategy by mapping the location of crashes and injuries against neighbourhood demographics to pinpoint communities disproportionately impacted.

“**There’s a lot of frustrations of trying to fill in the GBA+ section** or understand how it does and doesn’t apply to projects. But again, even though it has been challenging, I think we’re still in a lot better place.”

Staff, Edmonton

 [READ MORE](#) on page 30



Case Study Snapshot: **OTTAWA**

Ottawa was one of the first cities in Canada to create an equity policy, with its Equity and Inclusion Handbook in 2010. This policy guided staff with resources to question their assumptions and position within power structures, and identify and mitigate inequities in their work. More recently, the city has enshrined equity into both its new Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan. These policies translate equity concepts into specific directions for land use and transportation. One tangible example is the inclusion of a map of Ottawa’s “priority neighbourhoods” within the policies, pinpointing where residents are more likely to experience mobility barriers.

“**The map of Equity Priority neighbourhood is something that people can really grab on to. Otherwise, it’s a lot harder.**”

Staff, Ottawa

 [READ MORE](#) on page 35

Challenges to moving forward on transportation equity

Advancing transportation equity is an ongoing journey, and there is **still much to learn, change, and do**. The promising practices shared in this report highlight tangible ways municipalities can enhance their focus on transportation equity. However, practitioners and organizations are limited in their impact by broader challenges surrounding systemic inequities. Throughout our conversations with transportation practitioners, we heard about five major challenges that hinder cities' progress in advancing transportation equity in Canada:

1. The transportation profession needs to evolve.
2. Incomplete data limits our ability to act.
3. Barriers to engagement are structural.
4. Equity goals need to be adequately resourced.
5. Car dependency is slowing us down.



INTRODUCTION

Background

Nearly 1 million Canadians live in transportation poverty, where their ability to access opportunities is limited by inadequate, unaffordable, or unsafe travel options (1). Injustices in our transportation systems—built over time by inequitable planning and practice—stand in the way of people’s access to jobs, education, healthcare, and social activities, ultimately impacting their health, well-being, and quality of life. Transportation barriers are compounded by other social and economic disadvantages that impact some groups more than others, including people who are racialized, Indigenous, low-income, and living with disabilities.

There is growing consensus among city builders that the way we’ve been planning, designing, and delivering transportation is unfair and needs to change. At the same time, governments are increasing their investments in both active transportation and public transit infrastructure (2,3). Sustainable transportation investments stand to mitigate major challenges facing cities, from congestion to climate change to housing unaffordability. They are also a unique opportunity to level transportation inequities and build transportation systems that work for everyone.

Through our team’s extensive work with cities, we’ve heard that the big question is no longer *whether* to take action towards sustainable transportation equity, but *how*. Cities in Canada are moving to adopt

broad equity policies and goals, and transportation practitioners are eager for guidance on how to successfully action these commitments on the ground.

Project objectives

Our project set out with a goal to assemble practical guidance and inspiration on how equity can be meaningfully embedded in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of sustainable transportation interventions. We pursued this goal through three objectives:

1. **Examine the state of equity policies** in Canadian and international cities;
2. **Capture lessons learned** and strategies for applying equity policies and principles in the context of sustainable transportation;
3. **Convene the transportation community** to learn from inspiring practices and explore bold ideas for advancing sustainable transportation equity.

This report shares what we learned and heard throughout our process, which included a combination of crowdsourcing, policy reviews, and extensive interviews and dialogue with transportation practitioners. Our case studies focus on the efforts underway in

three Canadian cities—New Westminster, Edmonton, and Ottawa—and what other transportation practitioners can take away from their equity journeys. The cities we profile are only a small selection of municipalities taking strides towards transportation equity. While promising practices and inspiration for transportation equity can be found worldwide, our project mainly focused on urban areas (rather than towns or rural communities), specifically North American cities who broadly share similar legacies of colonialism, patterns of urban development, and geographic context.

Defining transportation equity

Transportation equity seeks fairness in transportation systems so that basic mobility needs are met for everyone in the community. While specific definitions of the concept vary, in this report we use the term transportation equity to encompass the fair distribution of transportation resources across communities and space (aka *distributional or spatial equity*); inclusive participation in decision-making processes (aka *procedural equity*); and recognition of the prevailing injustices that shape different levels of need and power within transportation systems today (aka *recognition equity*) (see the glossary for more information on types of transportation equity) (4). Transportation equity overlaps with other social justice concepts used in planning research and practice, like transportation poverty, mobility justice, environmental justice, and disability justice.

Transportation equity involves prioritizing facilities and services that favor under-resourced and **structurally marginalized communities**. We use this term throughout the report to describe social and spatial communities that have been historically discriminated against and

excluded from mainstream power structures, including but not limited to racialized people, Indigenous people, women, gender diverse people, LGBTQ2S+ people, people with disabilities, children and youth, people with low income, religious minorities, older adults, immigrants, and people who speak minority languages. Some cities use other terms with similar meanings, such as equity-deserving groups. We recognize that language around equity is imperfect and continually evolving.

During our review of municipal equity policies and dialogue with transportation practitioners, we picked up on **five key elements of transportation equity** that apply across contexts:

1 | Equity is not the same as equality.

Equality means everyone is treated alike and gets the same resources. In contrast, equity means everyone gets what they need, accounting for different transportation barriers and conditions (see [figure 1](#) on page 14). Transportation equity aims to level the playing field so that everyone can enjoy accessible, safe, and efficient transportation.

2 | Equity is about people.

In the transportation sector we often focus on trips or vehicles, but equity starts with the unmet needs of people. Those who have been discriminated against and excluded from mainstream systems of power are more likely to have their needs overlooked, including racialized people, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ2S+ people, people with disabilities, youth, older adults, immigrants, and people with low income.

3 | Equity is intersectional.

The transportation injustices people face are a product of multiple, intersecting facets of their social identity—like race, language, gender, wealth, and ability. This concept was coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw as *intersectionality* (5). Like traffic flowing into an intersection from different directions (6), discrimination on the basis of different social identities can converge to shape the transportation barriers and outcomes people experience.

4 | Equity is about process and outcomes.

People impacted by policies and projects should participate meaningfully in their development, implementation, and evaluation—and share their benefits and burdens equally. Applied to transportation practice, equity could therefore involve ground truthing data with community members to uncover needs and patterns of usage not captured by traditional data collection methods (*process*), or reducing unfair differences in pedestrian deaths and injuries between different neighbourhoods and groups (*outcomes*).

5 | Equity is linked to systems of power.

Transportation equity involves dismantling the power structures—like Colonialism and White Supremacy—that underlie every injustice in our transportation systems, from where interventions are built and who can afford to live there, to who is engaged, who benefits, and who is displaced. A holistic approach that considers how power dynamics shape both transportation processes and outcomes is necessary to designing more equitable transportation systems.



LEARN MORE ABOUT...

Equity concepts:

Cycling Equity & Co-Learning Toolkit - Jay Pitter (2023) This resource provides a thoughtful overview of key equity concepts that are relevant for transportation practice across any mode, not just cycling (see p. 19).

Systems of power:

Divided by Design - Smart Growth America (2023) This resource demonstrates how some of the openly racist practices of the past are still deeply embedded in the transportation field today. While the content is American, the calls to action are transferable to the Canadian context.

Intersectionality in transportation:

Understanding and Responding to the Transit Needs of Women in Canada - Leading Mobility, University of Alberta & Polytechnique Montréal (2022) This resource shows how identity influences transportation by studying how the transit needs of women vary based on age, race, income, and ability.

Equity in transportation outcomes:

A Review on the Implications of COVID-19 for Delivering Equitable Transportation - Mobilizing Justice (2022) This resource documents how shifts in transport policies, practices, and services during COVID-19 disproportionately impacted structurally marginalized communities across Canada.

Equity in transportation processes:

Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making - US Department of Transportation (2022) This resource offers a library of engagement techniques (p. 33, Appendix-B1), based on time, budget, language, audience size, and aim. This resource focuses on strategies where transportation practitioners lead engagement. See the above Cycling Equity & Co-Learning Toolkit for ideas on community-led engagement.

Figure 1

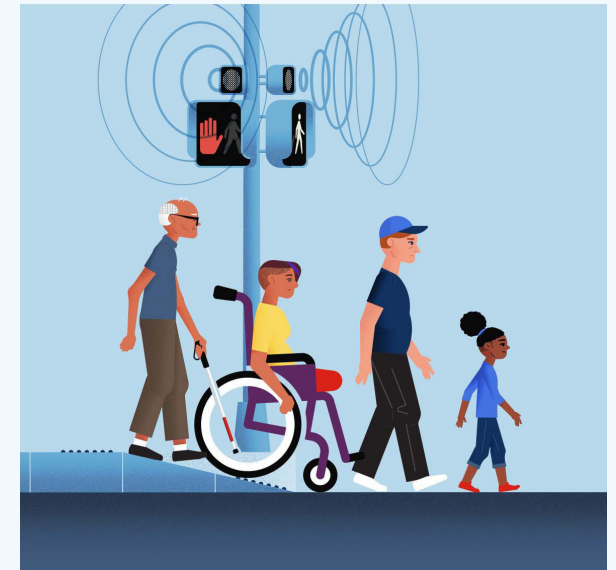
EQUALITY:

Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.



EQUITY:

Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances, and conditions.



Reproduced with permission of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, N.J.

RECONCILIATION & TRANSPORTATION

Canadian governments at all levels have a responsibility to act on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Backed by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*—the accepted framework for reconciliation in Canada—cities are starting to embrace the spirit of reconciliation (7). Municipalities (and the people working in them) are beginning their journey by learning the truth about Canada’s genocidal policies aimed at colonizing and assimilating Indigenous Peoples and their lands. Some municipalities are going deeper by uncovering the colonial structures and mechanisms embedded in their historic and contemporary city building practices—what Indigenous planner Ginger Gosnell-Myers calls a city’s “origin story” (7). Actions are being instructed by municipal reconciliation frameworks and policies that address the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 94 Calls to Action* and the *231 Calls to Justice* outlined by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People (MMIWG2S+). Despite policy guidance at the national, provincial, and local levels, progress on reconciliation in city planning has been slow (8).

Indigenous Peoples in Canada experience distinct transportation inequities stemming from historic and contemporary planning policies enacted at all levels of government. These include disproportionate burdens related to a lack of transportation options and lower levels of investment in infrastructure; higher risk from traffic exposure and vehicular violence; disproportionate impacts of the housing crisis; and identity-based discrimination and violence at the hands of law enforcement and industry. The reserve system, marked by forced displacement, land appropriation, legislated poverty, and spatial segregation, further compound these issues. The transportation sector may feel uncertain about their role in reconciliation or consider it outside their jurisdiction, but streets are physical spaces where the human impacts of colonial policy intersect. In this context, transportation practitioners are well positioned to act on reconciliation goals but need more clarity on how.

Equity work can support but not replace reconciliation efforts. The unique oppression experienced by Indigenous Peoples requires a distinct approach. We deliberated how to

approach reconciliation authentically in this project through iterative discussions during its development and initiation. Based on several considerations—particularly the diversity of Indigenous Communities and their distinct needs, and the recognition that reconciliation necessitates a deep relational commitment—we agreed that identifying promising practices for improving transportation equity among Indigenous Peoples requires a separate, dedicated process beyond the scope of the current project. We do, however, touch on the topic in our policy scan and case studies. In the policy scan, we highlighted if and how cities are framing reconciliation in their equity commitments. We also asked transportation practitioners working in our case study cities if there was clear guidance on how to approach reconciliation and work with Indigenous Peoples in their municipalities, and if and how reconciliation has been linked to equity in sustainable transportation planning. **Our takeaway: While there is some municipal policy guidance and action underway more broadly, reconciliation is an under-explored dimension of transportation equity that needs immediate attention.**

LEARN MORE ABOUT...

Indigenous rights and the pursuit of reconciliation in Canada:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 94 Calls to Action, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice make up the accepted framework for reconciliation in Canada. Within them are implicit and explicit calls for actions to advance transportation equity for Indigenous communities.

Why transportation is a reconciliation imperative:

Transportation paved the way for colonization — it can also support reconciliation. This analysis describes some of the persistent and serious Indigenous-specific mobility injustices experienced by Indigenous communities and people living in Canada and situates them within a framework of Indigenous rights.

Reconciliation in planning:

CIP Policy on Planning Practice and Reconciliation. This policy outlines the planning profession's unique role in the reconciliation process and serves as a call to action for planners to embed reconciliation in their practice.

Indigenous planning:

Co-creating the Cities We Deserve through Indigenous Knowledge. This book chapter describes how Indigenous Peoples and their knowledges have been excluded in colonial city building practices and explains how Indigenous planners are working to build these knowledges back into all aspects of urban planning.

Canadian cities working towards reconciliation:

Explore reconciliation opportunities for local governments, how cities are making progress on the TRC Calls to Action, and how cities like Vancouver, New Westminster, and Edmonton are approaching reconciliation.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Who is this report for?

This report is designed to guide and inspire the transportation community—including planners, engineers, consultants, advocates, or decision-makers working across various sectors—to embed equity principles into their everyday work. Our intent is to offer practitioners from different disciplines insights and ideas to advance their knowledge and practice, whether just starting or further along in their equity journey. We acknowledge that advancing transportation equity will necessitate broader systemic changes beyond the control of individuals, or even the transportation profession. This report aims to share inspiration and practices from cities who are making notable strides on transportation equity through mechanisms within their reach.

How is the report organized?

This report shares key takeaways from a year-long process (detailed on [page 18](#)) to document the state of equity policies in cities, capture promising practices for applying equity policies and principles to sustainable transportation interventions, and convene

the transportation community to share and learn from these strategies. Findings from the project are shared in four parts. **Part one** summarizes takeaways from our policy scan, which reviewed and mapped the contents of municipal equity policies across a selection of Canadian cities to capture common elements and opportunities. **Part two** zeroes in on lessons learned from the journeys of our three case study cities—New Westminster, Edmonton, and Ottawa—which are actively working to operationalize equity policies and principles in the sustainable transportation realm. We also briefly spotlight additional Canadian and US municipalities that stand out for their efforts to embed equity in sustainable transportation. **Part three** is a summary of the promising practices that surfaced from the project, both via our case studies and further dialogue with the transportation community at a workshop held in Winnipeg in conjunction with the ITE Canada/CARSP 2023 Joint Conference. The cross-cutting practices presented illustrate how equity can be embedded across transportation planning, implementation, and evaluation. **Part four** concludes with remaining challenges that are impeding progress on transportation equity and where the field is heading next.

Three ways to read the report

Summary (6 minutes):

For those with **limited time**, the [executive summary](#) (page 6) provides a concise overview of the report's key findings.

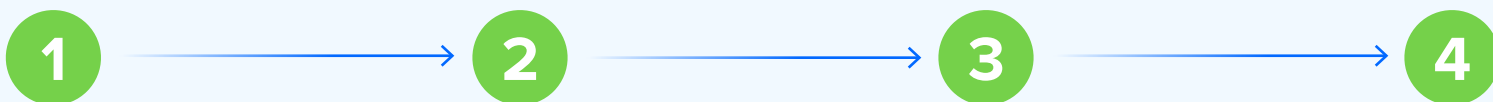
Scan (20 minutes):

For those wanting a **closer look** at practical takeaways and illustrative examples from the field, read the [executive summary](#) and the [summary of promising practices](#) in part 3.

Deep Dive (2 hours):

For a **full picture** on our process and findings, read the report cover to cover, including our methodology, policy scan takeaways, and case studies. Use the [summary of practices](#) in part 3 to reflect on the ways these may serve your work.

METHODOLOGY



1 Call for case studies August 2022

We compiled a list of Canadian and international cities putting equity at the forefront of policy and practice by searching websites of local governments for publicly available equity policies, crowdsourcing recommendations from our network through email and social media, and reviewing results of an existing equity scan (9). We searched for policies that were available in French or English. This combination of snowball sampling and crowdsourcing led us to yield a longlist of 22 municipalities to be considered for case study selection (see [Appendix page 51](#)).

2 Policy scan September 2022

To shortlist potential case study cities, we prioritized municipalities that a) have a dedicated, standalone equity policy; b) approach equity holistically (e.g. policy focus isn't limited to internal government affairs or a single priority population; c) are actively applying equity policies and principles in a sustainable transportation context; and d) collectively represent a diversity of geographic regions in Canada and population sizes (over a minimum urban threshold of 50,000 residents). We included INTERACT study cities to help our partners situate themselves in relation to other cities in Canada.

Based on these criteria, we proceeded with reviewing and analyzing equity policies from eight cities: Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. We conducted a systematic document analysis focused around the following content areas: definitions of equity, policy rationale, language regarding power and inequities, information on local context, policy process and methods, intersectionality, reconciliation, and tools and indicators for policy implementation.

3 Reporting October 2022

We published early findings from our scan of municipal equity policies in Plan Canada, a quarterly publication for planning professionals (10). The article explores six takeaways for practice and highlights examples of how these takeaways appear in policy documents. In addition, we prepared an in-depth report of our policy scan findings for INTERACT's Knowledge Hub, comprised of transportation staff from INTERACT's partner cities, urban academics and research trainees, and our national knowledge broker, the Canadian Urban Institute. Members of the Knowledge Hub served as advisors in the project, including for the case study selection process.

4 Case study selection November 2022

We conducted a rapid review of transportation plans that post-dated equity policies in the eight shortlisted cities to assess whether they contained equity-focused actions. This helped identify case study cities that stood out in terms of their approach to applying equity policies and principles in the context of sustainable transportation.

We convened INTERACT's Knowledge Hub to discuss results of the policy scan and the rapid review, select case studies, and refine our research strategy—including identifying relevant roles and departments within cities to contact as key informants, and important areas and questions to explore in our key informant interviews. The Knowledge Hub and project team identified the following cities for in-depth case studies: New Westminster, Edmonton, and Ottawa. We also selected additional cities in the US and Canada to spotlight that stood out for their innovative approach to advancing transportation equity but didn't fit our case study criteria.

5

6

7

8

Interviews

January-March 2023

We prepared a semi-structured interview guide (see [Appendix page 49](#)) to orient discussions with key informants around the evolution of each city's policy approach to equity and promising practices for applying equity to transportation. The interviews probed into each city's barriers and facilitators, explored specific tools and strategies in action, and covered approaches to measuring progress and equity impacts. We reached out to people involved in the development of relevant transportation plans in New Westminster, Edmonton, and Ottawa and asked them to connect us with more people. We spoke to 15+ transportation and equity practitioners in these cities, including engineers, planners, consultants, and data analysts.

Draft case studies

April-May 2023

We analyzed the interviews and summarized what we heard into a case study report for each city that captures their transportation equity journey—including policy context, lessons learned, inspiring practices, and growing pains. The research team worked collectively to transcribe interviews, code data from each case study city, and identify both city-specific and cross-cutting themes. A draft version of the case studies was shared back with case city representatives for review and feedback before finalizing a version to table at our partner summit.

Partner summit

June 2023

As part of the ITE Canada/CARSP 2023 Joint Conference held in Winnipeg, we organized a workshop to share, discuss, and build on takeaways from our draft case studies with representatives from case study cities, INTERACT city partners, and Canada's transportation and road safety communities more broadly. Through a mix of dialogue and scenario-based learning activities, we sought to discover promising practices, and potential pitfalls, when applying equity principles in a sustainable transportation context; apply lessons learned to real-world transportation planning scenarios; and explore bold ideas for advancing sustainable transportation equity in Canada. The insights gained during the workshop were used to refine the summary of promising practices.

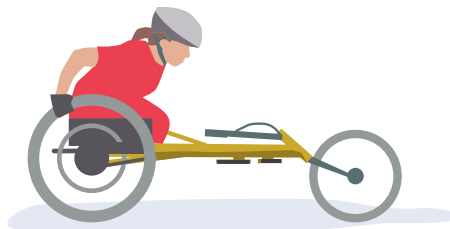
Dissemination

November 2023 onwards

We packaged learnings from the equity scan, case studies, city spotlights, and workshop in this report as a resource for the transportation community looking to embed equity principles into their everyday work. Next up, we are organizing dialogues and workshops with the transportation community and other urban practitioners to discuss and apply our findings, and identify opportunities to further advance transportation equity in cities across Canada.

PART 1 – EQUITY POLICY SCAN

Municipalities hold unique capacity to advance, or undermine, equity. Many municipalities are creating broad policies and frameworks to signal their commitment to redress past harms stemming from community planning, and guide more equitable decisions and actions going forward. To better understand emerging patterns and opportunities in this evolving area, we set out to examine the state of municipal equity policies within and outside Canada. Following a broad scan, we narrowed our focus on eight Canadian cities for an in-depth document analysis: Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax (see the methodology section for more details on our selection process). We then critically reviewed and analyzed the contents of published equity policies (listed in the [Appendix on page 51](#)) for each of these municipalities to compare and contrast their key elements. Based on our analysis, we identified **ten considerations for the development of municipal equity policies in Canada:**



1

Start with a clear vision for systemic change

Equity policies have a variety of starting points. Some policies focus on *why* equity needs to be integrated into municipal affairs, while others concentrate on *how*. Some policies begin with reforming internal processes within the organization, while others prioritize externally-facing initiatives with the community. These different approaches signal the need to take concrete action to treat the acute symptoms of inequities, while also working towards structural changes that address their root causes. Local governments should be thoughtful about the order in which they build out their equity efforts.

2

Ground the approach in local context

Most policies describe the local context at a high level, missing the opportunity to increase awareness of how local history influences inequity. By contrast, Ottawa developed data-driven profiles of priority populations to highlight relevant issues, and Edmonton compiled a resource of historical negative externalities resulting from zoning. This kind of content can recognize the lived experiences of structurally marginalized people, demonstrate the impacts of structural inequity, and help staff prioritize efforts to redress historical harms.

3

Centre diverse voices

Across policies, there is agreement that local governments need to attract and amplify diverse perspectives, both within the organization and when engaging with the community. Many policies also make recommendations to diversify representation in existing city practices, including engagement methods, hiring processes, and selection of advisory committee members. Some policies also acknowledge the need to address the barriers that make it difficult for people to participate, such as gaps in civic literacy, inaccessible venues, and childcare. For example, Saskatoon recommends including a budget to compensate Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers for their time and expertise.

4

Think critically about language

Some policies use language that signals a stronger commitment to equity. Policies that discuss concepts such as anti-racism, White Supremacy, and decolonization demonstrate a willingness to confront systems of power, whereas policies that rely on terms such as diversity, inclusion, and belonging suggest a reluctance to go there. These contrasting approaches highlight that language matters; practitioners should be explicit when naming power systems that contribute to inequity.

5

Apply an intersectional approach

Most policies define intersectionality as an essential concept. This suggests that local governments are trying to better understand the complex and nuanced experiences of residents through the lens of overlapping identities, such as gender, race, and class. The policy scan revealed that Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and disaggregated data are currently the two most common tools for operationalizing intersectionality. The policy scan shows that local governments know they need to understand diverse needs within their community before they can respond to them, but they are still developing methods to assess differences between and within groups.

6

Audit status quo for opportunities to improve

Many policies recognize a need to shift the way work is done in local governments in order to begin dismantling systemic inequities. To kickstart this process, New Westminster and Vancouver suggested completing an audit of existing practices to identify opportunities for change. Edmonton completed an in-depth review of its zoning bylaw as part of the renewal process. These cities show that the local government toolbox—including budgets, procurement, staff reports, and bylaws—has the potential to evolve and better account for equity.

7

Adopt tools to evaluate equity impacts

Three of the eight policies reviewed include reflexive questions intended to help staff identify inequities in their work. These are often packaged as checklists for different activities, from engagement to policy development. These tools can help staff understand their spheres of influence, and highlight that everyone in the organization has a role to play in advancing equity. While questions can be an effective tool for identifying problems, policies were unclear if there was a reporting mechanism to share if and how inequities are addressed after they are identified.

8

Create structures for accountability

Some of the policies include structures to oversee the implementation of equity initiatives, hold the local government accountable for its commitments, and cultivate cross-department collaboration. Halifax opted for department-level action plans, monitored through annual reporting. New Westminster recommended the creation of a dedicated equity office with permanent funding, similar to those in Edmonton, Halifax, Vancouver, and Victoria. In this way, the policy scan demonstrates the need to commit time, staff, and resources to equity.

9

Establish baseline and monitor impacts

Most policies identify the need to assess the current state of inequities in the community and evaluate the impact of equity initiatives going forward, but suggested that methods for monitoring and evaluation be developed separately. Some policies provide helpful guidance on the future development of evaluation methods, highlighting the need for disaggregated data, a combination of both quantitative data and qualitative data that captures the lived experiences of marginalized people, and cautions against perpetuating negative stereotypes.

10

Embrace a learning mindset

All of the policies emphasize that embedding equity in the work of local government requires listening and learning. With this in mind, many of the policies recommend various forms of education and training across all levels of the organization, from new employees to senior leadership. A common suggestion is the creation of employee resource groups, where staff with shared social identities can support each other. Another strategy is to build a community of practice by connecting with other departments and local governments doing equity work. These policies make it clear that a learning mindset is required to advance equity, and the state of practice will continue to evolve as cities share knowledge with each other.

PART 2 – CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: **NEW WESTMINSTER**



CITY SIZE	Population 78,916	Land Area (km²) 15.6	Density (people/km²) 5,052.4
AGE	Children (0-14 years) 12.6%	Older Adults (55+ years) 29.8%	
INCOME	Median Income (After-Tax) \$72,500	Low-Income Households[1] 9.7%	Income Inequality[2] 28%
SELECT STRUCTURALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES	Racialized People 46.8%	Recent Immigrants 6.5%	Indigenous People 3.1%
MAIN MODE OF COMMUTING	Total Walking, Cycling + Transit 30%	Target Sustainable Mode Share 60%	

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile Data for New Westminister at the Census Subdivision Level.

[1] Households that make less than half of the median income of households of the same size in Canada, based on the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT).

[2] Income distribution according to the Gini Coefficient, where values closer to 100% indicate greater income inequality (i.e. a smaller group of people receive a larger share of the population's total income.)

Background

New Westminster, British Columbia, is located on the unceded, traditional territories of the Halkomelem speaking peoples (11). New Westminster serves an important role in the region's goods movement and commuter network due to its strategic location in the centre of Metro Vancouver. The compact downtown hosts most of the population and amenities, where towers line the steep slopes leading down to a riverside esplanade. The city works with the regional transportation authority, Translink, to provide public transit, including over 20 bus routes, paratransit, and five light rail stations (12). With roughly 65 km of active mobility lanes (13), 61% of residents live within 400m of a high-comfort facility for walking, rolling, or bicycling (14), but there are pockets with poor access. The dense, built-up nature of the city constrains the ability to add road capacity and creates a strong foundation for sustainable transportation. Looking ahead, the city is set to grow to 100,000 by 2040. The city's focus is retrofitting the existing street network to better accommodate sustainable modes and emerging mobilities, such as electric scooters and autonomous vehicles, to meet the target of increasing the sustainable mode share to 60% by 2040.

Policy context

New Westminster has a history of electing councillors that champion sustainable transportation and equity. We heard there is a culture of thinking about and openly discussing equity impacts of city work at all levels of the organization. We also heard that earlier policies were high-level, and sometimes there is uncertainty about how to translate discussions into action. With time, staff are gaining clarity about the areas where local government actions can directly influence equity, through interpreting corporate directives and applying them to their daily work. The following page outlines some of the City's policies that provide guidance on equity and sustainable transportation, which were mentioned in interviews with transportation practitioners.



Equity definition

“Equality assumes everyone needs (and wants) the same things, while equity understands that individuals are starting from different places, and therefore require different supports to achieve the important goals. Working towards equity acknowledges that people are not all the same, and that some folks experience barriers caused by injustice. In this Framework, equity is one of the ultimate outcomes we desire. We aim for justice, to address and even out power differentials; we can then measure elements of equity within the City (as an organization) and within the community. But equity is also seen as a process—integrating equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism into all elements of day-to-day work. Equity as a process means being more aware of power differentials in how we interact with one another.”

DEIAR Framework, New Westminster, p. 6

Policy timeline – New Westminster

2015

Master Transportation Plan

- Identified sustainable modes as the top priority in the transportation hierarchy.
- Discussed the important role transportation systems play in providing equitable access to opportunities and meeting the diverse needs of different social groups, e.g. children, people with disabilities, and people with low income.

2019

Council Strategic Plan 2019-2022

- Provided staff with a strong mandate to embed equity in their transportation work, by enshrining compassion and sustainability into the City's vision and core values.
- Identified sustainable transportation and reconciliation, inclusion, and engagement as priority areas.

2019

Climate Emergency Declaration

- Outlined "Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action" that prioritized sustainable transportation, including accelerating the timeline for reaching its sustainable mode share goal and increasing uptake of electric vehicles.
- The 2020 budget was evaluated for alignment with these actions.

2022

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism (DEIAR) Framework

- Formalized the City's commitment to apply an equity lens to all work.
- Identified first steps to operationalize equity in the organization, at both an individual and structural level.
- Recommended the creation of an Equity Office resourced with permanent staff.

2022

eMobility Strategy

- Created a roadmap to expedite the uptake of electric vehicles and micromobility, with an emphasis on engaging with structurally marginalized communities to identify and remove barriers.

2022

Indigenous Relations Advisor hired

- Created a new position dedicated to supporting the City's ongoing efforts towards Truth and Reconciliation.

2022

All-Ages-and-Abilities Transportation Network

- Established a plan for rapid implementation of 26 new corridors, adding ~30km to the network over the next 5 years.
- Used equity rationale to prioritize investment in neighbourhoods with higher proportions of structurally marginalized communities that are less likely to have access to private vehicles.

Promising practices from New Westminster

1. Foster civic literacy using inclusive approaches

The complexity of local government creates barriers for accessing services, particularly for newcomers to Canada and people who speak English as an additional language. Staff recognized this challenge in New Westminster and wanted to ensure that emissions reductions initiatives had uptake across the community, not just in a small group of people with privilege. Consequently, they broadened the scope of their energy efficiency education campaign and created multicultural, multilingual resources that share basic information about the services provided by local government. The goal was to offer information in an inclusive format, so that people felt confident advocating for themselves when navigating city hall.

“So, it’s really always about reaching people in a way that is accessible and comfortable... We’ve had members of the community say, we finally know when garbage day is.”

–Staff, New Westminster



2. Reimagine public engagement to reach under-engaged groups

Transportation decisions are typically subject to feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders with different values. In New Westminster, we heard transportation practitioners think critically about whose voices are amplified in the conversation, and whose voices are missing.

“I think we’re getting much better at...identifying communities that don’t normally come out, that don’t normally talk to us, don’t have the privilege of knowledge, time, childcare, to go to an event. We need to go to them.”

–Staff, New Westminster

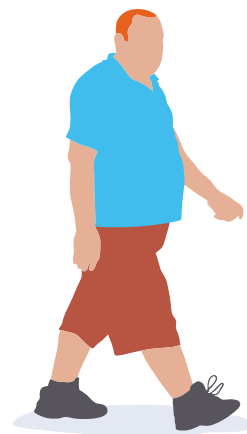
This reflection increased awareness of the barriers to participation in public engagement and cultivated innovation. Transportation staff worked with their internal engagement specialist and consultants to experiment with different formats and venues, with the goal of hearing from a greater cross-section of the community, especially groups that are not typically captured in traditional open houses. For example, the 2020 Streets for People initiative aimed to reallocate road space to enhance the public realm, in response to the need for social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating existing sustainable transportation goals. The project team worked with a local organization that supports people experiencing homelessness to participate in walking tours; the tours were led by street-involved people, who were compensated for their time. This approach recognized the expertise of people experiencing homelessness, who are frequent users of public space but traditionally under-engaged.

3. Prioritize under-served communities

The scarcity of municipal funds can lead to uneven investments in transportation infrastructure across communities. To uncover potential gaps in New Westminster, staff mapped existing active mobility infrastructure and overlaid it with neighbourhood demographic data. They looked specifically at access to infrastructure in neighbourhoods where there are concentrations of people who are less likely to have access to private vehicles, such as youth, seniors, recent immigrants, and Indigenous people. This exercise provided tangible evidence of inequities in access to transportation infrastructure and enabled them to prioritize under-served neighbourhoods when building the new All-Ages-and-Abilities (AAA) active transportation network.

“There was basically a hole on the map where there’d been no investment. Not a surprise. But we were then able to use that [map] and use equity as a factor in prioritizing our future investment.”

–Staff, New Westminster



4. Learn from experimentation

Quick builds create opportunities for people to experience different street designs and provide feedback to inform the permanent project. New Westminster staff worked with consultants to create a temporary greenway as a demonstration project. In the process, they made what seemed like minor changes to the local bus route, but quickly learned this had a disproportionate impact on the older adults and people with mobility issues who lived nearby. The project team realized that, although this group is small in size, the negative impact on their lives was large. The team quickly responded to the feedback, evaluating several route options before landing on a solution that worked better for everyone. What we heard from the project team was that this process helped them understand the limits of their own experience and perceptions as able-bodied transportation practitioners, and inspired them to apply these learnings to future projects. We also heard that the support from the City’s leadership to experiment was critical, resulting in a project with a positive learning experience, rather than one that ended in failure.

“Clients need to have some vulnerability and humility and be willing to learn, again New West is great for that. Absolutely there are things we learned from [the greenway project] and we’d do differently now, but they still did it, and they’re committed to doing it again. There are other clients who probably would have gotten scared from that approach and not want to do it ever again.”

–Consultant, New Westminster

Looking ahead

New Westminster is working on sustainable transportation interventions, such as implementing a AAA Active Transportation Network based on results of an equity analysis, prioritizing bus speed and reliability solutions based on equity indicators, and conducting a feasibility study for electric bikeshare with a strong focus on options to ensure equitable access to the system. The current Council has had a strong focus on road safety, accessibility, asset management, and vulnerable road users. They have moved to ensure that sidewalk replacement is focused on areas with higher pedestrian volumes, bus shelters are installed where they are needed most, and road safety analysis is focused on those who are most vulnerable. In terms of engagement, the City is consolidating a large number of topic-specific citizen advisory committees into a larger Community Advisory Assembly, which will comprise members that more closely represent demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the community at large and consider a broad range of topics.





Case Study 2: **EDMONTON**

CITY SIZE	Population 1,010,899	Land Area (km²) 765.6	Density (people/km²) 1,320.4
AGE	Children (0-14 years) 18.2%	Older Adults (55+ years) 25.4%	
INCOME	Median Income (After-Tax) \$79,500	Low-Income Households[1] 9.6%	Income Inequality[2] 30%
SELECT STRUCTURALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES	Racialized People 42.8%	Recent Immigrants 6.8%	Indigenous People 5.8%
MAIN MODE OF COMMUTING	Total Walking, Cycling + Transit 13%	Target Sustainable Mode Share 50%	

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile Data for Edmonton at the Census Subdivision Level.

[1] A household is considered low income if they make less than half of the median income of households of the same size in Canada, based on the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT).

[2] This measure uses the Gini Coefficient to assess how income is distributed within a community, where values closer to 100% indicate a higher proportion of income inequality (i.e. a smaller group of people have a disproportionate share of income.)

Background

Edmonton, Alberta, is a city on Treaty 6 Lands, including a portion of the Métis homelands and the traditional territory of First Nations such as the Nehiyaw (Cree), Denesuliné (Dene), Nakota Sioux (Stoney), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) (15). The provincial capital is located on the key Highway 2 corridor that connects Calgary to northern communities. The river valley curves through the city, where the prairies transition to the boreal forest. The city's transit agency, Edmonton Transit Services, operates two light rail lines, paratransit, over 100 bus routes, and on-demand service that connects outer neighbourhoods with transit centres (16). With over 1,100 km of active mobility facilities (13), the low traffic stress network is currently concentrated around the downtown and University of Alberta. As the city prepares to grow to 1.25 million people by 2023 (15), the focus is on providing better sustainable transportation options. The 2023-2026 budget included \$100 million to accelerate the implementation of the bike plan, and planning is underway to expand mass transit, with substantial equity and engagement components.

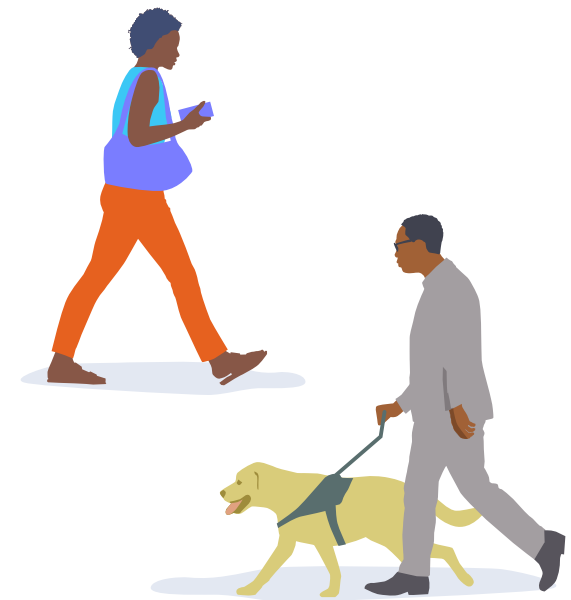
Policy context

In Edmonton, we heard that the corporate adoption of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was a pivotal moment (17). Equity became an explicit mandate, and leaders across all levels of the organization started talking openly about equity. Edmonton's use of GBA+ contributes to its reputation as an innovator when it comes to city building; it was the first city in Canada to adopt Vision Zero, remove minimum parking requirements (18), and create a tool for auditing bylaws for inequity. Over time, Edmonton strengthened the policy support for equity by embedding it in its municipal plan, and transportation plans. We heard GBA+ can be challenging for staff accustomed to status quo approaches, because it prompts them to try new, different ways of working, but there is acceptance that staff have the responsibility to implement the vision for an inclusive and compassionate city. The following page outlines some of the policies that were mentioned in interviews with transportation practitioners as guiding Edmonton's integration of equity in sustainable transportation.

Equity definition

“Equity is fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for everyone, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Equity is different than equality which focuses on treating everyone the same way. Equity recognizes that people have different needs and experience different barriers.”

The Art of Inclusion, Edmonton, p. 37



Policy timeline – Edmonton

2017

GBA+ Adoption

- City Council endorsed GBA+ training for senior leadership and initiated the process to update the Diversity and Inclusion Framework to include GBA+.

2019

Art of Inclusion: Our Diversity & Inclusion Framework

- Described how to promote inclusion using the GBA+ process.
- Identified key actions across hiring, training, and monitoring to advance diversity and inclusion.

2020

The Bike Plan (2020) & Implementation Guide (2021)

- Included equity as a factor for prioritizing investment in neighbourhoods with lower income, less access to infrastructure, and higher crash rates.
- Recommended collecting disaggregated data to better understand ridership by age, gender, income, and neighbourhood.
- Provided guidelines for more equitable community engagement when designing local bike routes.

2020

City Plan

- Combined the former land use and transportation master plans into one cohesive document to guide growth.
- Set target for 50% sustainable mode share.
- Reinforced GBA+ by directing staff to apply an equity lens to the development and implementation of City infrastructure, policy, programs, and services.

2020

Safe Mobility Strategy

- Piloted GBA+ as an analytic tool to identify assumptions in technical analysis, gaps in data, and voices missing from public engagement.
- Completed analysis to understand which groups of people were disproportionately exposed to crashes and understand if the volume of traffic safety inquiries aligned with high crash neighbourhoods.

2021

Zoning Bylaw Renewal GBA+ and Equity Toolkit

- Partnered with University of Alberta to complete research on the history of zoning in Edmonton.
- Conducted interviews with 23 people with ties to structurally marginalized communities to understand their perspective of land use and zoning bylaws.
- Shared findings transparently, including resources designed to help planners identify and mitigate inequities, such as a library of negative externalities caused by discriminatory zoning.

Promising practices from Edmonton

1. Mandate systematic equity analysis

Cities are not always consistent in their approach to equity, leading to missed considerations, or the omission of equity from decision-making altogether. As a systematic approach, Edmonton added GBA+ as a required step for staff reports, new projects, and service evaluations. GBA+ is an analytical tool for identifying assumptions and missing information that can contribute to inequity. It considers a broad spectrum of structurally marginalized communities. In Edmonton, we heard that GBA+ normalized equity conversations as an integral part of staff work, promoted a more holistic approach to equity throughout the project lifecycle, and improved the transparency of the equity impacts of city work.

“There’s a lot of frustrations of trying to fill in the GBA+ section or understand how it does and doesn’t apply to projects. But again, even though it has been challenging, I think we’re still in a lot better place.”

–Staff, Edmonton

“I’m noticing when we engage with all our colleagues across the corporation, equity is always part of the conversation, because it comes into the why. Why are you making this change?”

–Staff, Edmonton

2. Support continuous learning and experimentation

Equity is a new concept for many city staff, including transportation practitioners. Edmonton supported staff in their learning journey by providing equity learning opportunities across the organization. Councillors, middle managers, and senior leaders participated in mandatory GBA+ training. Consultants were supported by internal equity specialists when contributing to GBA+ pilot projects. Staff partnered with local researchers to provide academic expertise on zoning and safe mobility. Data analysts attended workshops on qualitative research methods. The cumulative impact of these efforts is a community of practice, where staff feel comfortable critically examining their own work, identifying areas for improvement, and sharing their learnings with their colleagues and members of the public. A key takeaway from Edmonton is that transportation staff were able to take action on equity without being given transportation-specific equity guidelines. Rather, the GBA+ tool and training created conditions for staff to come up with their own ideas based on their role, project, and community context.

“Equity is one of these journeys, where it’ll be lifelong learning, especially to address our biases. You know I’m a White woman with privileges, and so it’s just a constant, constant learning... And I think our leaders...throughout the corporation continually listen and learn.”

–Staff, Edmonton

“So, I think what we’ve learned is don’t expect to have it all figured out or to have all the answers, but try to do what you can. Early on it can be very overwhelming. I think to try we need to have the perfect, most equitable project outcome. It’s not always going to happen, and may not always be realistic, but at least we tried. I think learnings come from that, that maybe you do better in the future, and it’s something that seems to kind of build on itself. So, the more understanding we get, the more understanding that we can grow going forward. So just try, don’t expect to be perfect at it, because if so, you never get started.”

–Staff, Edmonton

“Based on crash and equity analyses, we know that some parts of our community need extra focus and attention over the next five years. The transportation system is one of the many mechanisms through which society marginalizes certain communities... Removing transportation-related barriers will require confronting uncomfortable topics, learning about experiences others have had that may not align with our own, and acting as allies to those that are disproportionately affected by the way the current system is planned, designed, activated, and maintained.”

–Safe Mobility Strategy, Edmonton, p. 37

3. Examine needs through an equity lens

Cities have limited resources to improve road safety, and often these resources are prioritized based on resident requests. In the Safe Mobility Strategy, Edmonton mapped the location of crashes and injuries in the transportation network, then overlaid the map with neighbourhood demographics. They found that structurally marginalized communities were disproportionately exposed to crashes and serious injury. These communities included households with lower incomes, Indigenous people, and people that speak languages other than English. They also mapped the location of traffic safety inquiries and found little overlap between the neighbourhoods with the highest volumes of traffic safety inquiries and neighbourhoods with high numbers of crashes and injuries. This disparity helped staff realize that those most in need might experience barriers to contacting the City, and transition to more proactive road safety investigations based on needs, rather than just inquiries.

Looking ahead

The City of Edmonton is currently implementing policies and strategies that were developed with equity considerations. The Bike Plan, the Safe Mobility Strategy, and The City Plan continue to inform and help reinforce the consideration of equity in the many decisions that are guided by these documents.

Edmonton is in a process of continuous learning. Past and current experiences inform how GBA+ analysis and equity considerations are incorporated into city-wide initiatives like mass transit planning, as well as more localized project-specific decision-making. The city also works to better consider both the time and resources needed to include equity considerations in the initial stages of projects to ensure meaningful and intentional results.

Case Study 3: **OTTAWA**



CITY SIZE	Population 1,017,449	Land Area (km²) 2,788.2	Density (people/km²) 364.9
AGE	Children (0-14 years) 16.4%	Older Adults (55+ years) 30.2%	
INCOME	Median Income (After-Tax) \$88,000	Low-Income Households[1] 8.6%	Income Inequality[2] 30%
SELECT STRUCTURALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES	Racialized People 32.5%	Recent Immigrants 4.7%	Indigenous People 2.6%
MAIN MODE OF COMMUTING	Total Walking, Cycling + Transit 20%	Target Sustainable Mode Share 50%	

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile Data for Ottawa at the Census Subdivision Level.

[1] A household is considered low income if they make less than half of the median income of households of the same size in Canada, based on the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT).

[2] This measure uses the Gini Coefficient to assess how income is distributed within a community, where values closer to 100% indicate a higher proportion of income inequality (i.e. a small group of people have a disproportionate share of income.)

Background

Ottawa, Ontario, is a city on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation (19). As the national capital, it has an urban core that offers employment and education opportunities that attract people from across the Ottawa-Gatineau region. The greenbelt wraps around the urban core, separating it from suburban and rural communities, but also providing recreation opportunities. The city's transit agency, OC Transpo, operates paratransit service, over 170 bus routes including a bus rapid transit network, and a newer light rail transit system (20). There are over 1190km of active mobility lanes in Ottawa (13), with roughly 50km that are maintained during the winter (21). Historically, the transportation system focused on connecting commuters in the suburbs to the urban core, and travel between suburbs using sustainable modes was more difficult. The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on remote work and commuting in Ottawa are uncertain, as the transit system has yet to recover to pre-2020 ridership. The large land base, diversity of development, and extensive road network create challenges for sustainable transportation, as the City aims to shift away from greenfield development to infill density and reach a majority sustainable mode share target.

Policy context

Ottawa was one of the first cities in Canada to create an equity policy in 2010. More recently, there has been a push to hire equity specialists to advise on the distinct needs of structurally marginalized communities, with resources dedicated to gender equity, anti-racism, and Indigenous relations. A series of new policies centred equity, building momentum for a structural approach to embedding equity in local government decision-making. We heard there is still uncertainty on what these policies mean in practice for operations staff, but there is a commitment to collaborating with colleagues with policy making and equity expertise to brainstorm new approaches to their work. The following page outlines some of the policies highlighted by local transportation and equity practitioners as providing guidance on equity and sustainable transportation.

Equity definitions

“Equity is treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal results and benefits.”

Equity and Inclusion Handbook, Ottawa, p. 10

“The TMP will pursue a more equitable transportation system and combat “mobility poverty” through investment in streets, sidewalks, the public realm, and other transportation improvements in neighbourhoods with strong equity concerns... Mobility poverty occurs when not having access to a car, poor public transit options, or substandard walking and cycling infrastructure compounds other forms of social or economic disadvantage.”

Transportation Master Plan — Part 1, Ottawa, p. 38 & 152 (22)

Policy timeline – Ottawa

2018

Equity and Inclusion Handbook

- Based on Ottawa's original Equity and Inclusion Lens Guide (2010, updated 2015).
- Guided staff to question their assumptions and identify their position with power structures.
- Provided checklists that ask questions designed to help staff identify and mitigate inequities in their work.
- Developed data-driven profiles of structurally marginalized communities in Ottawa, identified key issues they face, and relevant City initiatives.

2021

Women and Gender Equity Strategy

- Recommended the creation of a new section for equity implications in corporate reports, with a focus on issues related to gender, race, and Indigenous peoples.
- Called for the application of an intersectional equity lens to City work, using the new Official Plan (OP) as an example where women's transportation and housing needs could be explicitly addressed.

2022

New Official Plan

- Identified gender and racial equity as a cross-cutting policy issue and integrated those dimensions in implementation policies throughout the OP.
- Directed the Transportation Master Plan update to consider equity, particularly in transit planning for different groups of women.
- Adopted the concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods as a core policy framework that could improve access to opportunities for structurally marginalized communities.
- Set a target for majority sustainable mode share.
- Established a growth strategy that prioritized infill density over new greenfield development.

2023

Transportation Master Plan - Part 1

- Anchored in the concept of reducing mobility poverty and transportation barriers for structurally marginalized communities.
- Identified priority neighbourhoods for investments in new and improved transportation infrastructure.

Promising practices from Ottawa

1. Embed equity specialists in transportation projects

People from structurally marginalized communities are underrepresented in the transportation profession, and traditional public engagement does not always capture their perspectives. Ottawa took steps to address this by embedding equity specialists in the development of master plans. These specialists are part of larger teams of staff responsible for advocating for the needs of structurally marginalized groups. We heard they questioned the status quo, providing valuable insight based on their equity training, lived experience, and relationships with the community. Going forward, transportation staff hope to enhance these perspectives by engaging directly with communities, such as newcomers, youth, and Indigenous people.

“It started by working very closely with the policy makers... to understand why transportation is not the same for everybody. So, within the group of women, we reached an understanding that Black, racialized, and Indigenous women also do not experience transportation in the same way.”

–Staff, Ottawa

“There’s a position that’s focused on gender equity. I think having somebody whose job it is to...make sure that those considerations are being brought into all aspects of the way that the city does business and does planning, it’s probably a major reason for why we’re starting to see these things happen.”

–Consultant, Ottawa

2. Mainstream equity in policy

Staff struggle to justify making changes based on an equity rationale without policy support. Ottawa built a strong policy foundation by enshrining equity into both its new Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan. These policies translate equity concepts into specific directions for land use and transportation. By centering equity policies in the core plans that guide the daily work of practitioners, Ottawa gave technical staff an equity mandate explicit to their discipline, countering misconceptions that equity is a social planning issue.

This multilayered, policy-based approach positioned Ottawa for success when recommending equity actions at the implementation stage. We heard that this strategy was intentionally upstream to maximize the impact of limited resources; the intent is that equity will be considered at the outset and better integrated into decision-making, instead of staff trying to justify changes using equity on a project-by-project basis. It also provides staff with the policy levers to advance and anchor changes and recommendations for a project.

“The Official Plan now requires all local roads include one sidewalk at least on one side of the street, or two if it’s leading to a major destination... Those “small little wins” have a ripple effect.”

–Staff, Ottawa

3. Map inequities to guide investment

Equity is a complex topic that can be difficult to conceptualize at the community level. Ottawa made inequity tangible by mapping priority neighbourhoods where residents are more likely to experience mobility barriers. The map leverages an existing socio-spatial dataset with organizational buy-in since it's part of the new Official Plan. This dataset created by the local Social Planning Council in partnership with United Way and the City of Ottawa used World Health Organization (WHO) methodology to identify neighbourhoods that are economically and socially vulnerable using data from the Census, City, Public Health Unit, and WalkScore.com (23). The recently approved TMP Part 1 directs engagement efforts and investment to these neighbourhoods. The map has already been used to prioritize the implementation of new crosswalks.

“The map of equity priority neighbourhoods is something that people can really grab on to. Otherwise, it’s a lot harder.”

–Staff, Ottawa

4. Consider equity implications when preparing corporate reports

Corporate reports are one of the key sources of information used by municipal decision makers, but they don't always include information on the equity impacts of recommendations. Ottawa decided to adopt a more systematic approach and added a new section to their corporate report template dedicated to “Gender, Race, Indigenous, and Equity Implications,” as proposed in the Women and Gender Equity Strategy. This optional section prompts staff across all departments to consider the possible equity impacts of their work. This reporting mechanism

enables councillors, residents, and media to track the equity impacts of City decisions, improving the accountability and transparency of equity work in Ottawa.

“If you decide not to fill it... it will generate even more questions about your plan, so you would rather fill it.”

–Staff, Ottawa

Looking ahead

The City of Ottawa is in the process of developing Part 2 of its Transportation Master Plan, the Capital Infrastructure Plan. The Capital Infrastructure Plan will identify the transit and road projects and investments that are needed to meet Ottawa's mobility needs and achieve the City's mode share and greenhouse gas reduction targets. It will also evaluate different investment scenarios and identify a subset of projects that are affordable within the City's long-range financial plans. The technical work on the TMP Part 2 will include equity metrics in the evaluation of alternatives.

The City also plans to use new public engagement methods to hear directly from residents of equity-deserving groups and the community organizations that work with them. This includes: graphic facilitation of workshops with youth and Indigenous groups; short surveys delivered by Youth Ambassadors within equity neighbourhoods and by Ottawa Community Housing resident leaders to the people in their communities; and focus groups at the sites of organizations that serve equity-deserving groups. These engagement methods will be evaluated to determine whether they may be used for other transportation-focused engagement activities going forward.

ADDITIONAL CITY SPOTLIGHTS

There are many different approaches to embedding equity in sustainable transportation work. This section highlights inspiring and innovative approaches from other municipalities working to advance transportation equity. We chose to limit the spotlights to North American municipalities (both urban and rural) in an effort to share ideas that are likely transferable to the Canadian context. However, practitioners can look around the globe for inspiration on transportation equity (24).



Exploring equity across scales: **Toronto, Ontario**

Population: 3,025,647

Instead of a single, overarching equity policy, the City of Toronto has 10+ initiatives dedicated to addressing systemic issues such as anti-racism and reconciliation, as well as responding to the needs of specific priority populations, from newcomers to youth. The recently updated Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (TSNS) identifies 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) as priorities for resource allocation. These neighbourhoods were identified using an adapted WHO methodology that considers economic opportunity, social development, voter turnout, built environment, and health outcomes. Since 2016, the City of Toronto has been developing an equity responsive budgeting process, where changes to the operating budget are assessed for the magnitude and direction of impact on structurally marginalized communities. The Transportation Services Division has developed its own suite of equity tools, including equity criteria for capital program prioritization, an equity lens for analyzing the transportation barriers and needs of different equity-deserving groups, and baselining exercise to understand the state of (in)equity in the community. A review of the state of good repair found that neighbourhoods were receiving similar levels of road rehabilitation, yet NIAs had worse quality pavement, showing that equality does not lead to equity. **The City of Toronto stands out for its wide array of approaches to equity across different scales, from priority populations, to neighbourhoods, departments, and corporate-wide initiatives.**



Leading with local: County of Kings, Nova Scotia

Population: 62,914

The County of Kings is a rural area that can be seen as a leader around transportation equity (25). In 2021, Council adopted a renewed equity policy that uses a distinctly intersectional lens to highlight the perspectives of the local African Nova Scotian community and Mi'kmaq First Nations. The policy features bold concepts such as reparations and treaty rights that are rarely mentioned in other Canadian policies. The policy lays out short-term actions towards equity that are organized by pillars. The Built Environment pillar highlights “how lands and spaces can be managed to enhance representation, and protect cultural resources.” The 2021 Active Transportation Plan converts these policy ideas into tangible recommendations to advance equity, such as providing wayfinding in multiple languages and marking important Mi'kmaq sites along active transportation trails. The recommendations were prioritized based on a set of criteria that included equity; actions that were likely to have a positive impact on structurally marginalized communities were expedited. **This approach stands out for its feasibility within the rural context and thoughtful recognition of local communities with distinct rights.**



Harnessing data to drive change: Oakland, California

Population: 433,823

The City of Oakland took a data-driven approach to embedding equity in transportation. In 2018, the city partnered with the City University of New York to create indicators that quantify the gap between the most and least disadvantaged racial groups. The final report uses plain language to interpret the results, including explaining the data sources and assumptions that underpin the indicators. These indicators were used to create the Department of Transportation's (OakDOT) Geographic Equity Toolbox, an interactive web map that identifies neighbourhoods with high equity needs. The map is used to prioritize capital investments, including interventions under Safe Oakland Streets, which aims to eliminate disparities in severe and fatal injuries from crashes. This equity-driven initiative focuses on engineering and making changes to the built environment guided by community engagement, but it also uses enforcement strategies. In recognition of past and ongoing harm, OakDOT's in-house Racial Equity Team created a subcommittee dedicated to minimizing harmful interactions between law enforcement and racialized communities. **This approach stands out for the way it harnesses data as a tool to understand the impacts of inequity and support structural changes to the way the department is organized, prioritizes resources, and collaborates with the community.**



Centring community through co-creation: Seattle, Washington

Population: 779,200

The City of Seattle was early to start on their equity learning journey. Their 2012 Racial Equity Toolkit, a city-wide resource to help staff identify and mitigate inequities in their own work, has served as a template for many other cities. More recently, the Seattle Department of Transportation used this strong foundation to create its own equity framework specific to the transportation context. This framework aimed to center the voices of those most affected by transportation inequities. The city convened a Transportation Equity Workgroup comprised of people with perspectives that have not been traditionally represented in strategic planning and policy development, and connections to local organizations that serve the community. The workgroup members were compensated for their time and expertise as they collaborated with City staff and engaged with the community to identify core values, develop strategies, and create a 6-year implementation plan to evolve transportation policies and practices towards equity. The framework also includes a detailed history that demonstrates how past and current inequities are tied to city building, such as redlining. **The framework stands out because of the way it makes direct connections between equity issues and transportation (such as displacement due to infrastructure investments), the way it shares the process of the workgroup as part of the learning, and the way it is grounded in local context.**



Legislating equity into decision-making: Washington, DC

Population: 689,545

The District of Columbia used legislation to embed equity into two core elements of city governance: approving annual budgets and drafting new bills. Since 2021, budget submissions must describe how resources are allocated to advance racial equity and reduce disparities, and proposed bills must be assessed for impacts on racial equity. Tools were created to support staff with the implementation of these new requirements. The Racial Equity Budgeting Tool (REBT) provides guidance on how to apply an equity lens on the memos, presentations, and forms required in the budget submission process, and suggests data sources that can help staff understand the racial equity impacts of their budget requests. The Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) of new bills is conducted by a dedicated team of staff. The REIA team approaches the assessment differently depending on the scope of the proposed change; a review of the impact of the symptoms of racial inequity is conducted for smaller changes such as service adjustments, whereas larger reforms are reviewed for their impact on the structures that contribute to racial inequity. Before councillors vote on the proposed bill, the REIA team provides a report that explains how the change will harm, improve, or have a negligible impact on the lives of residents from structurally marginalized communities. Both the budget and bill assessments are publicly available. **The District of Columbia's approach stands out for its systematic implementation, commitment of resources and support, and transparency to community members.**

PART 3 – SUMMARY OF PROMISING PRACTICES

Over the past year, we've delved deeply into the state of equity and transportation policies in Canadian and US cities, identified jurisdictions making notable progress in their journey towards sustainable transportation equity, and connected with practitioners on the front lines of city building to explore what's working, what's not, and why. At the heart of this process is one vital question that has inspired our work from the start: **how can cities advance sustainable transportation equity from rhetoric to reality?**


Grounded in the lessons learned from both our case studies and broader dialogue with the transportation community at our partner summit in Winnipeg, we surfaced **15 promising practices** for embedding equity in sustainable transportation. Outlined below, these practices are organized around key areas of sustainable transportation interventions, from policy and strategy through to implementation and evaluation. While the municipalities profiled earlier in the report are implementing many of these practices, we highlight one particular city in each area that showcases the practices in action.

Promising practices for embedding equity in sustainable transportation interventions



Policy and Strategy


1. **Formalize a city-wide commitment to equity** by including equity principles in broad, long-range policies and plans (e.g. Official Community Plan), and through stand-alone equity policies and strategies to address systemic issues such as anti-racism and reconciliation.
2. **Integrate equity in transportation-specific policies and plans**, like a Transportation Master Plan, to translate equity concepts into specific directions for transportation and ensure equity is considered at the outset of any project.
3. **Establish a clear vision for what equity means for transportation.** Envisioning what transportation equity means to a city with its own unique context and challenges orients the strategies needed to embed equity in transportation.

 **READ ABOUT** how Ottawa is mainstreaming equity in their policies on page 38.



Analysis and Reporting


4. **Mandate systematic equity analysis** as part of any municipal decision. Systematically assessing the baseline inequities and potential impacts of a project or decision on different populations and reporting findings in corporate and budget reports help organizations institutionalize equity. Making these equity assessments public improves transparency with community members.
5. **Tap into varied data to identify equity needs.** Drawing from spatial data on mobility barriers, disaggregated sociodemographic and health data, travel behaviour data, measures of exposure to risk, and qualitative evidence of people's experiences gives a more complete picture of equity needs.
6. **Apply an intersectional approach.** Tools like GBA+ and disaggregated data can help staff operationalize this concept in transportation, considering the experiences of residents through the lens of overlapping identities, such as gender, race, and class.
7. **Support equity analyses with staff resources and data**, like a checklist of reflexive questions, or suggested data sources to draw from.

 **READ ABOUT** how Edmonton is mapping inequities to guide transportation investments on page 33.



Engagement and Representation


8. **Embed equity specialists within work teams.** Including equity specialists in transportation policy and planning initiatives can bring new perspectives and community connections, challenge status quo, and ensure the needs of structurally marginalized groups are championed.
9. **Convene advisory committees** that include representation from structurally marginalized communities, and local organizations who serve and advocate for them, to diversify voices in decision-making processes.
10. **Rethink public engagement to reach under-engaged groups.** Targeted engagement opportunities like focus groups at community events, graphic facilitation during workshops, and surveys delivered by community ambassadors are needed to reach groups facing structural marginalization. Collecting optional demographic data during these activities allows practitioners to consider and report on who was included and excluded in decision-making.
11. **Remove barriers to community engagement.** Transportation professionals can facilitate engagement in planning processes by addressing logistical barriers (e.g. offering childcare and being thoughtful about scheduling and location) and communication barriers (e.g. using plain language; including visual supports like maps, infographics and imagery; providing multicultural and multilingual resources about municipal processes).

 [READ ABOUT](#) how New Westminster is reimagining their engagement strategies to reach under-engaged groups on page 27.



Prioritization and Implementation


12. **Prioritize resource allocation in neighbourhoods that need them most.** This can be through approaches like an equity-responsive budgeting process, expediting actions that will have a positive impact on structurally marginalized communities, or prioritizing new infrastructure in areas with greater needs.

 [READ ABOUT](#) how Toronto used an equity responsive budgeting process to prioritize investments where they will have the greatest impact on page 40.



Learning and Evaluation

13. **Support continuous learning across the organization.** By providing learning opportunities like mandatory GBA+ training, hiring internal equity specialists, and partnering with academics, organizations can foster an environment where transportation staff feel equipped to embed equity in their role and projects.
14. **Learn from experimentation.** Making room for teams to understand the limits of their experience and perceptions, own and learn from missteps, and evolve their knowledge and practice accordingly creates a positive environment for learning and experimentation.
15. **Audit status quo for opportunities to improve.** Evaluating current practices in local governments can identify areas for potential change to help start dismantling systemic inequities.

 [READ ABOUT](#) how Seattle provided tools for staff and worked with the community to evolve planning practices on page 42.

PART 4 – MOVING FORWARD

Advancing transportation equity is an ongoing journey, and there is still much to learn, change, and do. The promising practices shared in this report highlight tangible ways municipalities can enhance their focus on transportation equity. However, practitioners and organizations are limited in their impact by broader challenges surrounding systemic inequities. Throughout our conversations with transportation practitioners, we heard about five major challenges that hinder cities' progress in advancing transportation equity in Canada.

Five ongoing challenges to moving forward on transportation equity...

1. The transportation profession needs to evolve.

Advancing transportation equity requires a shift in the profession itself to better reflect and respond to the people it serves. This entails reevaluating the role of planners and engineers as the primary experts, and making more space for community expertise and experiential knowledge within planning processes. It also requires rethinking recruitment and hiring practices so staff represent the diversity within the community. These changes require a shift in the way practitioners are trained and hired, and how roles are defined.

2. Incomplete data limits our ability to act.

Getting the right data is key to identifying inequities, yet transportation practitioners often work with limited data: census data is infrequent, collecting primary data on mobility behaviours can be prohibitively costly, and survey data often reflects a small segment of the diversity of perspectives within the community. Data is also needed to evaluate the impacts of decisions and effectiveness of new practices. As the policy scan revealed, many municipalities identify the need for evaluation in their equity policies, but don't specify how it can be done and suggest that methods be developed separately. Going forward, cities will be looking for localized data, tools, and research support to measure impacts of equity initiatives and integrate learnings into future work.

3. Barriers to engagement are structural.

Engaging with structurally marginalized communities requires building trust and developing tailored strategies that value the time, effort, and knowledge contributed by community members. Cities are making strides in lowering the logistical barriers to engagement, yet still come up against structural barriers such as disproportionate time pressures and distrust in government and institutions. These barriers can only be tackled through major societal changes that allow everyone to be able and willing to engage.

4. Equity goals need to be adequately resourced.

There is a mismatch between our equity commitments and the resources available to achieve them. Many of the promising practices spotlighted here require more time, budget, and people than current standard practices do, something organizations haven't yet fully grappled with. Cities looking to implement their equity goals require dedicated staff and resources to coordinate both internally, and externally with the community. Without these, equity efforts remain fragmented, and cities run the risk of burdening structurally marginalized communities and the organizations who serve them. Cities are also contending with finite financial resources. Investing in equity will require them to confront difficult trade-offs, challenge status quo, and direct spending towards under-served areas and communities of greatest need.

5. Car dependency is slowing us down.

North American cities are largely designed around private automobiles. The resulting policies, bylaws, design guidelines, and land use patterns—plus prevailing car culture—makes disrupting this paradigm an uphill battle. This landscape perpetuates expectations around the cost and provision of parking, speed limits, and motor vehicle traffic flow, which all limit the implementation and uptake of sustainable transportation modes. Transportation practitioners know how to build walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented spaces, but need the license to do so. Lack of political and public will to shift away from car-centric design slows down initiatives that could have major impacts on equity. A policy, practice, and cultural shift towards prioritizing sustainable modes and equitable urban design is needed to advance transportation equity.

CONCLUSION

Through our dialogue with practitioners and researchers, we learned about both successes and struggles to embed equity in transportation. The case studies revealed tangible ways for cities to integrate equity in different areas of practice. At the same time, no one we spoke to felt like they had all of the answers. Across our many conversations with city builders, one thing is clear: we can't advance equity alone. In every municipality, progress was possible because of the collective efforts of many across departments, sectors, and disciplines.

Equity is an ongoing journey where how we work is just as important as what we're working towards. Advancing transportation equity will require fundamental changes to the ways cities operate, from whose expertise we value, to how we allocate resources, relinquish power, and collaborate. Transportation practitioners are likely to find themselves in unfamiliar territory without tried-and-tested tools to guide them, but we hope the equity journeys of cities profiled in this report serve as a reminder that progress is more important than perfection.

This report is a testament to how city builders across Canada are working to embed equity in their transportation projects and everyday practice. There is much to be learned from sharing and connecting across cities, while being mindful that what proves effective in one community may not necessarily apply to another. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy for reducing inequity. Our hope is that this work can inspire city builders to consider how these practices apply in their own unique contexts, to experiment with new ways of thinking and working, and to join a growing community of practitioners committed to transportation equity.

APPENDICES

Interview guide

Setting the Stage

Individual Context

1. What is your role with the city and how long have you been in this position?
 - How long have you been with the city?
2. Could you please give me a quick overview of the main tasks and activities you are responsible for in your work?

City Context

3. Tell me about the sustainable transportation context of your city...
 - (e.g. current planning and infrastructure, population trends, mode share etc.)
4. From your experience, can you tell me the pathway your city has taken in its equity work?
 1. Who is championing transportation equity in your city—internally and externally?
 2. What are some of the past barriers that you've overcome?
 3. What are some current barriers that persist?
 4. Which factors facilitated the city's equity journey?
5. We reviewed the [THESE POLICES]. ...are there any other important policy documents we should know about?

Defining Equity

6. We found this definition of equity in your city's policies... *[READ DEFINITION IF REQUESTED]*.
How does this definition translate to transportation?
7. Is there a shared understanding of equity across departments and roles?

Equity Tools and Strategies in Action

8. Tell me about a time you feel you were able to successfully incorporate equity into your work.
 1. Was this approach informed by your city's equity policy, or was it informed by other resources?
 2. How do you think this strategy would translate to other contexts?

9. I am curious about how equity shows up in the different activities of your day to day work.
 1. Which activities/tasks do you feel there are concrete opportunities to apply equity? Why do you think this is?
 2. Which activities/tasks do you feel are challenging to apply equity to? Why do you think this is a challenge?
10. Could you please explain how decisions are typically made in your work?
 1. Is equity considered in this process?
 2. Can you give me some examples of how? or why not?
11. How do you build the business case for resourcing equity in transportation?
 1. How do you make the most of the resources you have?
 2. How do you avoid compromising equity when budgets and timelines are tight?
12. How would your approach to your work change if equity was the highest priority and there were no practical barriers?

Reconciliation

13. In your city, is there clear guidance on how to approach reconciliation and work with Indigenous people?
 1. What does this look like in transportation?
 2. Is reconciliation seen as distinct, related or the same as equity work?

Measuring Equity

14. How is progress in transportation equity measured in your city?
 1. Do you have defined metrics or indicators?
 2. Can you tell me about a time you thought your work had measurable impacts on equity?
15. How are the equity impacts of your work tracked and shared?
 1. How are the equity impacts of your work communicated with different groups, such as other departments, elected officials and members of the public?

Wrap Up

16. What are the most promising equity tools and strategies you want to try in your work?
17. What advice would you give to other cities trying to take action on equity in transportation?
18. Would you like to add anything else about equity and transportation that I may have missed?
19. Is there anyone you think we should speak to? Please do not volunteer the name of another individual without their explicit consent but rather forward our contact information and recruitment material to anyone who might be interested.

Longlist of equity policies

	CITY	PROVINCE	EQUITY POLICY	YEAR
1	Vancouver	BC	<u>Equity Framework</u>	2021
2	Ottawa	ON	<u>Equity & Inclusion Lens</u>	2018
3	Halifax	NS	<u>Diversity & Inclusion Framework</u>	2018
4	Edmonton	AB	<u>Art of Inclusion + Equity Toolkit</u>	2019
5	New Westminster	BC	<u>Diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism (DEIAR) framework</u>	2022
6	Victoria	BC	<u>Equity Framework</u>	2022
7	Saskatoon	SK	<u>Triple Bottom Line Framework + Equity Toolkit</u>	2020, 2021
8	Montreal	QC	<u>Solidarity, Equity and Inclusion Plan: So No One Is Left Behind</u>	2021
9	Burnaby	BC	<u>Social Sustainability Strategy</u>	2011
10	Oshawa	ON	<u>Equity & Inclusion Lens</u>	2021
11	Stratford	PEI	<u>Diversity & Inclusion Plan</u>	2018
12	Moncton	NB	<u>Social Inclusion Plan</u>	2016
13	London	ON	<u>Community Diversity & Inclusion Strategy</u>	2017
14	Newmarket	ON	<u>DEI Plan + Lens</u>	2021
15	Hamilton	ON	<u>EDI Handbook</u>	2019
16	County of Kings	NS	<u>Toward Equity and Diversity: A Strategy for Belonging</u>	2021
17	Calgary	AB	<u>Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy</u>	2019
18	Windsor	ON	<u>Diversity & Inclusion Initiative</u>	2018
19	Vaughan	ON	<u>DEI Plan</u>	2021
20	Markham	ON	<u>Diversity Action Plan + Anti-Black Racism Plan</u>	2022
21	Toronto	ON	<u>Youth Equity Lens</u>	2014
22	Mississauga	ON	<u>Workplace Diversity & Inclusion Strategy</u>	2017

Glossary

TYPE OF EQUITY	DEFINITION	CONNECTION TO TRANSPORTATION PRACTICE
Distributional	<p>Resources and disamenities are shared fairly between social groups and neighbourhoods (also known as spatial or territorial equity).</p> <p>Distribution of resources is prioritized based on need and impact.</p>	<p>In many cities, there are unfair differences in the burden of pedestrian deaths and serious injuries between different neighbourhoods and groups of people.</p>
Procedural	<p>People impacted by decisions have meaningful opportunities to participate in fair, inclusive, and transparent engagement processes.</p> <p>People holding positions of power generally represent the communities they serve (also known as representational equity).</p>	<p>Traditional public engagement has often relied on voluntary participation in online surveys and open houses, but these methods often fail to reach structurally marginalized groups.</p>
Recognitional	<p>People and institutions endeavour to address the root causes of inequities (also known as structural equity).</p> <p>Local context and history guides decision-making.</p> <p>Differences between and within groups are respected, including different cultures, values, and ways of knowing.</p>	<p>Past road building projects have displaced structurally marginalized groups, making them more vulnerable to mobility poverty today.</p>

Adapted from Meerow et al (2019) and [Urban Sustainability Directors' Network \(USDN\) Equity in Sustainability Scan, 2014](#)

Implicit/unconscious bias: An implicit attitude, stereotype, motivation or assumption that can occur without one's knowledge, control or intention. Unconscious bias is a result of one's life experiences and affects all types of people. Everyone carries implicit or unconscious biases. Examples of unconscious bias include gender bias, cultural bias, race/ethnicity bias, age bias, language and institutional bias. Decisions made based on unconscious bias can compound over time to significantly impact the lives and opportunities of others, both positively and negatively.

—Edmonton Zoning Bylaw Renewal GBA+ and Equity Toolkit, 2021

Intersectionality: This concept developed by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw helps us understand the various ways that power and privilege impact individuals and groups, and how intersections of identity create unique experiences. We all have layers of identity that provide us with advantages in some areas of our life, and disadvantages in other areas. Who we are affects how we interact with our community, and how it reacts to us. Multiple forms of discrimination can intersect and have a compound effect. For example, the lived experience of a white woman is different from a Black woman. Without considering intersectionality, actions that aim to address injustice toward one group may end up perpetuating injustices experienced by other groups.

—New Westminster DEIAR Framework, 2022

Mobility/transport poverty: Occurs when social and economic disadvantage compounds with transportation disadvantages, such as not having access to a car, poor public transit options, or substandard walking and cycling infrastructure. When transportation options are unsafe, unaffordable, or unsuitable, they can create barriers for people trying to get and keep a job, access healthcare and social services, buy groceries, or participate in community activities.

—Ottawa Transportation Master Plan, 2023

Racialization/Racialized: The socially constructed process through which certain groups are identified (or named) as belonging to a particular "race." A racialized person may experience different and/or unfair treatment based on perceived characteristics such as skin colour, ethnicity, national origin, religious clothing, language, accents, and first and/or last names. This term replaces the outdated and problematic term "visible minority."

—Edmonton Art of Inclusion: Our Diversity & Inclusion Framework, 2019

Systems of Power: The structures that influence who holds positions of authority, and who has the ability to shape the norms that govern social groups, workplaces, institutions, and society. **Oppression** occurs when power is exercised to systematically disadvantage certain groups. Oppression can manifest in various ways, including discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping, violence, and the denial of access to resources and opportunities. Below, we highlight two specific systems of power and oppression relevant for the Canadian context:

White supremacy: Cultural understanding of race hierarchy where whiteness is valued the most, maintaining structures of power that lead to wide-reaching harm to and oppression of racialized populations.

—New Westminster DEIAR Framework, 2022

Colonialism & Settler Colonialism: The ongoing process of invasion, dispossession, genocide, and subjugation of a people. The result is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants and the long-term result is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. Settler

colonialism — such as in the case of Canada — is the unique process where the colonizing population does not leave the territory, asserts ongoing sovereignty to the land, actively seeks to assimilate the Indigenous populations and extinguish their cultures, traditions and ties to the land. Colonialism refers to the ideology or method that makes way for colonization.

—[Government of Canada, Anti-Racism Lexicon, 2019](#)

Structurally marginalized groups: We use this term to describe social and spatial communities that have been historically discriminated against and excluded from mainstream power structures, including but not limited to racialized people, Indigenous people, women, gender diverse people, LGBTQ2S+ people, people with disabilities, children and youth, older adults, immigrants, people with low income, and people in minority language or religion situations. Some cities use other terms with similar meanings, such as equity-deserving groups. There is no perfect term, so language will continue to evolve over time.

Structural/systemic barriers: Obstacles that exclude social groups or spatial communities of people from full participation in, and the benefits of, social, economic, and political life. They may be hidden or unintentional, but are built into the way society works. Existing policies, practices and procedures, as well as assumptions and stereotypes, reinforce them.

—[City for All Women Initiative, 2015](#)

Transportation justice aims to address inequities within the transportation system. This concept focuses on redressing historical transportation policies and practices, and reforming current approaches in the transportation field. **Mobility justice** goes beyond the transportation system and considers the holistic factors that affect people's ability to access opportunities, including class, gender, and race. This concept focuses on dismantling the systems of power that make it unsafe for structurally marginalized groups to access opportunities.

References

1. Allen J, Farber S. Sizing up transport poverty: A national scale accounting of low-income households suffering from inaccessibility in Canada, and what to do about it. *Transp Policy*. 2019 Feb 1;74:214–23.
2. Canada I. Infrastructure Canada - Overview [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2022 May 5]. Available from: infrastructure.gc.ca/trans/index-eng.html
3. Jones RPJ. Trudeau pledges billions in permanent funding for public transit [Internet]. *CBC News*. 2021. Available from: cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-transit-fund-1.5908346
4. Meerow S, Pajouhesh P, Miller TR. Social equity in urban resilience planning. *Local Environ*. 2019 Sep;24(9):793–808.
5. Crenshaw K. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Rev*. 1991;43(6):1241–99.
6. Crenshaw K. Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *Univ Chic Leg Forum*. 1989;Vol. 1989(Iss. 1):139–68.
7. Gosnell-Myers G. Co-creating the Cities We Deserve through Indigenous Knowledge. In: *Sacred Civics*. Routledge; 2022.
8. womentransform [Internet]. [cited 2023 Sep 8]. TRC Calls to Action | WTC. Available from: womentransformingcities.org/trc-calls-to-action
9. Faith Ford, Ryan Klemencic, Claire Lee, Ellen McGowan, Megan Meldrum, Alex Pysklywec, et al. Planning for Equity: Centring Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Canadian Municipal Planning Practice, Lessons for North Park Neighbourhood Association in Victoria, BC [Internet]. School of Urban and Regional Planning, Queen's University; 2020 Dec [cited 2023 Aug 21] p. 164. Available from: queensu.ca/geographyandplanning/sites/dgpwww/files/uploaded_files/SURP/Project%20Course%20Documents/SURP-823%20Final%20Report.pdf
10. Williams T, Barr V. Municipal Equity Policies: Takeaways for Planners. *Plan Can*. 2022 Winter;64(4).
11. City of New Westminster. Land Acknowledgement Guidelines & Background [Internet]. [cited 2023 Sep 15]. Available from: newwestcity.ca/indigenous_reconciliation/land-acknowledgement
12. City of New Westminster. City of New Westminster. [cited 2023 Sep 15]. Transit. Available from: newwestcity.ca/transportation/getting-around/transit
13. Ferster, C, Winters, M, Beirsto, J, Laberee, K, Manaugh, K, Nelson, T. National bike infrastructure network layer created by applying the Canadian Bikeway Comfort and Safety Classification System (Can-BICS) to OpenStreetMap data (OSM). [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2023 Sep 13]. Available from: arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=a91c3270b322473da8b3c81793e6902c
14. City of New Westminster. City of New Westminster. All Ages and Abilities Active Transportation Network Plan.
15. City of Edmonton. Edmonton City Plan [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2023 Sep 13]. Available from: edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/city-plan
16. City of Edmonton. ETS Maps, Routes and Schedules | City of Edmonton [Internet]. [cited 2023 Sep 13]. Available from: edmonton.ca/ets/maps-routes-schedules-service
17. City of Edmonton. Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) [Internet]. 2017. Available from: webdocs.edmonton.ca/siredocs/published_meetings/120/677815.pdf
18. Faid, J, Kapitsila, B, Cooper, D. Transport Canada. 2022. Canadian Urban Mobility Report 2.0.

19. Services C and S. City of Ottawa. 2022 [cited 2023 Sep 15]. Indigenous relations. Available from: ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/creating-equal-inclusive-and-diverse-city/indigenous-relations
20. OC Transpo [Internet]. [cited 2023 Sep 15]. Service types | OC Transpo. Available from: octranspo.com/en/our-services/bus-o-train-network/service-types
21. Planning RE and ED. City of Ottawa. 2023 [cited 2023 Sep 15]. Active transportation. Available from: ottawa.ca/en/parking-roads-and-travel/active-transportation
22. City of Ottawa. Transportation Master Plan Part 1 [Internet]. [cited 2023 Oct 24]. Available from: pub-ottawa.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=121324
23. Social Planning Council of Ottawa. Neighbourhood Equity Index Project Report [Internet]. 2019. Available from: neighbourhoodequity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NEI-Report-Feb-22-2001.pdf
24. How to create gender-inclusive transport: Lessons from around the world [Internet]. WomenMobilizeWomen. 2023 [cited 2023 Sep 8]. Available from: womenmobilize.org/how-to-create-gender-inclusive-transport-lessons-from-around-the-world
25. News · JH· C. CBC. 2023 [cited 2023 Sep 8]. Municipality of the County of Kings will go it alone on diversity strategy | CBC News. Available from: [.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/kings-county-towns-turn-down-regional-diversity-initiative-1.6780067](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/kings-county-towns-turn-down-regional-diversity-initiative-1.6780067)

Positionality statements

Daniel Fuller

I am a relatively tall white guy who grew up in a middle class household in Saskatoon. I am a member of the Fransaskois community. I have been involved as a board member for numerous provincial and national Francophone organizations. Francophone communities outside of Quebec have a long history of organized advocacy for language rights equity in Canada. I apply the logic, compassion, and tenacity that I have learned in my community to help other communities. Growing up I also rode my bike to and spent lots of time in one of the neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of Indigenous residents in Saskatoon. I directly saw the impacts of colonialism, residential schools, and resulting trauma, in particular for youth in the neighbourhood. I see mobility justice as a critical aspect of reconciliation and hope to support people who can contribute to improving equitable mobility.

Tessa Williams

I am a settler from a long line of fishing families from Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island). I grew up in Kjiipuktuk (Halifax, Nova Scotia), a mid-sized city on the unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. I benefit from unearned privilege as a white, straight, cis-gender woman, who speaks English as a first language, was born with citizenship, and currently lives without a disability. After completing a degree in Community Design, I moved away from home for a job opportunity in the male-dominated field of transportation; this lived experience made me sensitive to gender and class issues. While my time as a municipal planner grants me practical perspective, it also makes me sympathetic to institutions. I am learning to let go of defensiveness, apply a critical lens, and hold people in power accountable. I offer my learnings from this project not as an expert, but as a student of equity.

Victoria Barr

I am a settler with Irish and Scottish ancestry, currently living on the lands of the ləkʷəŋən peoples, the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations – also called Victoria, BC. I grew up on the lands of the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (Niagara Region, Ontario), and moved to BC in my 20s because I wanted to spend less time in a car and more time exploring nature. My passion for social justice and tendency to push for policies that foster community well-being stems in part from being a mom. As a parent I often wonder: What kind of world will our kids and grandkids inherit? What kind of messes are we leaving them to sort out? My background is in both public health and planning, and I have been working toward building healthy and equitable communities for almost 30 years. As a white woman with much privilege, I humbly try to listen, learn and reflect each day.

Meghan Winters

I am a white settler who was raised on the lands of the *kʷikwə́ləm* (*Kwikwetlem First Nation*) by parents who came from Cape Breton and from the prairies. Through university I rode my bike everywhere - mostly because I was broke. In my first career I commuted by bike every day across the Knight Street bridge, which might be Vancouver's most unwelcoming crossing; all trucks, no bike infrastructure. I may have been fearless then, but fast-forward several incidents of being hit by a person driving a car, and then navigating a city with a couple of children in tow, I have come to see very clearly how inequities in the built environment limit mobility and opportunities for so many people. At this stage, along with my partner I am a caregiver of teens and aging parents, and am lucky to remain very able bodied. I'm grateful to the intergenerational support of a middle class family that enabled me to purchase a home in Vancouver decades ago, and for my current job security that anchors my family. In my work and personal life, I'm committed to using the substantial privilege I have to hold up and amplify the voices and experiences of those who may not have time, resources, or knowledge of how to share their needs and expertise.

Jaimy Fischer

I am Red River Métis and settler (Irish and German). I grew up as part of a working-class family on the lands of the T'Sou-ke and *ləkʷəŋən* speaking peoples (Vancouver Island), and currently live and work on the traditional, ancestral, and stolen lands of the *xʷməθkʷəyəm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwxwú7mesh* *Úxwumixw* (Squamish), *səlilwətał* (Tseil-Waututh), and *kʷikwə́ləm* (Kwikwetlem) Nations. My ancestors, active fighters against colonial oppression, gifted me with the responsibility to advocate for Indigenous rights; their involvement in community planning, organization, and direct action in the Red River and Northwest Resistances is where I draw my strength and inspiration from. My passion for mobility justice stems from my lived experience: I've been walking, biking, and taking public transit to get around since I was in kindergarten, have lived in remote and transport disadvantaged communities without reliable access to a car, and spent the better part of my youth helping my disabled father navigate the hostile urban landscape in a wheelchair. These experiences have created an embodied understanding of how transportation impacts more than just mobility - it directly impacts how free, connected, and valuable we feel as people, and whether and how we can improve our circumstances. As a first-generation learner, I'm grateful for the opportunities higher education has provided me, and I'm committed to using my gained privileges in pursuit of transportation reconciliation.

Meridith Sones

I am a white settler raised on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation in Esquesing or "Land of the Tall Pines"; in a small town in the countryside of Ontario now known as Halton Hills. My parents came to Turtle Island from England before I was born in what was supposed to be a temporary adventure, but they fell in love with Canada and never looked back. I'm the youngest of four kids and grew up in a rural community outside of "town" where nature and bikes were the best (and pretty much only) entertainment. I now live and work as an uninvited guest on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh peoples. Nature and bikes are still my two favourite things, privileges I am able to access and enjoy as an educated, able-bodied, healthy white person who can move through public spaces without the worry of exclusion or enforcement. Now I travel with two kids on the back of my bike and know the mix of joy and fear that comes with trying to live more car-free in a car-centric suburb. As a public health practitioner turned researcher, I'm focused on using my training and position to elevate the experiences of people who live in communities that are preventing their health and mobility, instead of promoting it—especially children and youth, and other groups overlooked in city building.

Zoé Poirier Stephens

I am a white settler from Tiohtià:ke (Montréal, Québec), unceded land that belong to the Kanien'kehá:ka nation. I have a post-secondary education thanks to the support of my family. Fluent in both English and French, I can navigate different social and professional situations with ease in Québec and Canada and am aware of the privilege and access it affords me. I studied urban planning because I was interested in the many ways city design, transportation systems, and social environments influence our well-being and our day-to-day experiences. I face few barriers as I move around in the city: I love taking public transit, walking, or trying a new bike route. I recognize that is not everyone's experience. For me, transportation equity means building systems so everyone can enjoy navigating their city and feel supported in doing so. I have learned a lot by contributing to this report, namely to identify and talk about inequity in a clear and direct way. I commit to taking these learnings to other areas of my work, recognizing when to listen and when to use my privilege to speak up.

Yan Kestens

I am a full professor at Université de Montréal, with a deep awareness of the intricate tapestry of my personal history and experiences and the ways they intersect with my research. Born in France to a French father and German mother, my family heritage includes diverse backgrounds, encompassing Spanish, Algerian, and Belgian roots. My family's history bears the weight of the Second World War, with members having played parts on both the French and German sides. Growing up, I was influenced by the context of nations coming together to construct a unified Europe, and witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall as a landmark. In 1997, I immigrated to Quebec, Canada, where I have resided ever since, building a life with my wife, who carries a heritage blending French and American identities, and, today, raising four children on the non-ceded territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka nation (Longueuil). This mosaic of experiences, cultures, and familial legacies has shaped my understanding of the world and my place within it. As a white male, I recognize the privilege I carry, a result of a complex interplay of history, identity, and circumstance. This recognition serves as a constant reminder of the responsibility I bear to leverage my privilege in the pursuit of social justice and equity. I am driven by the belief that diverse perspectives and backgrounds enrich our collective understanding and strengthen our capacity to address global challenges.

Kevin Manaugh

As a white settler originally from the ancestral lands of the Kitihawa of the Potawatomi people, I acknowledge the privileges inherent in my upbringing. Raised in the suburban landscapes of the midwestern U.S. in an upper-middle-class family, I was afforded access to high-quality education and a supportive family. Despite spending most of my formative years in car-dependent environments - and obtaining my driver's license the day I turned 16 - my evolving experiences and convictions have guided me towards advocating for and embracing active modes of transportation. Presently residing and working in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal, Québec), on unceded land belonging to the Kanien'kehá:ka nation, I navigate the city primarily on foot and two wheels, although my partner and I do own an automobile. With a research focus on mobility justice spanning over a decade, I centre my work on understanding the diverse lived experiences individuals encounter within various transportation networks and how to convey information to decision-makers who can improve these systems for people of all ages and abilities.

INTERACT

INTERVENTIONS, EQUITY, RESEARCH,
AND ACTION IN CITIES TEAM