COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION: DEVELOPING AN EQUITABLE VMT MITIGATION PROGRAM FOR SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Tuesday, May 21, 2024  12:00-12:30p.m. (PT)
The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) & Senate Bill 743
Project Team

MTI Project Coordinators and Researchers
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SJSU Student Teams
Literature Review: Brandon Weaver, Emily Rosas, and Lena Eyen,
Spatial Analysis: Gil Navarrete, Maxwell Belote-Broussard, Luana Chen, and Shane Fields
Community Engagement: Abenaezer Tassew, Juan Mendez-Arias, and Victor Huynh
Stakeholder Interviews: Annie Jones, Michelle Chang, Thuy Nguyen
Stakeholder Interviews: Anna Kalthoff, Elizabeth Bartlett, and Tishrona Godfrey
Report Background

• Graduate MUP students from the Fall 2023 cohort of the SJSU Urban Planning Policy Analysis course (URBP 236) assisted with the development of the equity framework for the program in four areas:
  ➢ Literature Review
  ➢ Spatial Analysis
  ➢ Community Engagement Observations
  ➢ Stakeholder Interviews

• Building upon student findings and preliminary recommendations, the MTI research team developed a refined set of policy recommendations for the VTA project team.
Literature Review

- Focused on identifying best practices and strategies for incorporating equity into program design and frameworks.

- 23 pieces of literature, including 5 planning documents and 18 research articles, were analyzed, including VMT mitigation-related literature and some related to other relevant program types, like environmental resources.
Spatial Analysis

• Focused on identifying other areas in addition to MTC EPCs to consider for community engagement (in VTA’s current project) and project prioritization (in the future).

• A total of 10 maps were created using ArcGIS Pro to highlight where equity areas for each index overlapped with high and low-VMT areas and which communities experienced multiple inequities and burdens.
Community Engagement

• Focused on assessing equity indicators in VTA’s community engagement approach during Phase 1.

• Students attended three tabling events, one Virtual Community Meeting, and one CBO focus group session.

• The research team attended TAG meetings and reviewed additional literature.
Stakeholder Interviews

• Focused on gathering more in-depth information for community transportation needs, challenges, and preferences.

• Two student groups completed a total of 20 stakeholder interviews.

• The research team consolidated findings from both student groups and produced graphs to visualize responses.
Literature Review Findings

- Program equity should be defined in a locally relevant way.
- Equity should be incorporated at key decision-making points, particularly for the project prioritization and evaluation metrics.
- It is a best practice to develop an informative and implementable accountability plan.
Spatial Analysis Findings

Additional areas to consider for community engagement and VMT mitigation measure selection were identified in northern Sunnyvale, Morgan Hill, and in the unincorporated area east of Gilroy.
Community Engagement Findings

The VTA project team’s approach to public meetings, survey groups, and surveys was excellent. Areas that could be improved are simplifying informational materials for non-technical audiences and better leveraging social media as a channel of communication.
Stakeholder Interview Findings

Improved transit and enhanced feelings of safety for alternative travel modes were top priorities shared by interviewees. Most interviewees were conditionally support of development contributions to VMT mitigation measures. Main concerns were transparency and accountability in project selection and funding processes.
# Key Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Administrative Ease</th>
<th>Time Frame to Implement</th>
<th>Degree of Equity Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and adopt a localized definition of VMT Equity</td>
<td>Somewhat challenging</td>
<td>Short-to-medium term</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an informative and implementable accountability plan</td>
<td>Somewhat challenging</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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## Key Recommendations

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<tr>
<td>Embed equity at key decision-making points, especially project prioritization and evaluation</td>
<td>Somewhat challenging</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize public transit investments to improve the availability, frequency, reliability, and speed of transit</td>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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</tbody>
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Key Takeaways and Conclusion

• VTA is already making great progress in engaging the community equitably and developing the project equity framework. The following strategies would further contribute to program equity:

  • VTA should incorporate findings from the spatial analysis and stakeholder interviews into the process of developing a localized definition of VMT equity.
  • Development of an informative and implementable accountability plan can help VTA reinforce program equity goals as well as improve transparency and trust with the public.
Thank you!

Questions?

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