



## Board Report

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### EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AUGUST 20, 2020

**SUBJECT: EQUITY AND RACE PROGRAM UPDATE**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on the Equity and Race Program.

#### **ISSUE**

This report outlines the activities taken under the leadership of Metro's new Executive Officer, Equity and Race and plans to continue implementing the Metro Equity Platform Framework adopted by the Board in March 2018.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Metro's Equity Platform ("Platform") was approved by the Metro Board of Directors ("Board") in March 2018 (Attachment A). The core objective is to increase access to opportunities including housing, jobs, healthcare, education, and other key determinants of health and thriving communities. The Platform is explicit in its focus on the vast disparities that exist in access to opportunity and is intended to help identify and implement projects or programs that reduce and ultimately eliminate those disparities. It is driven by access needs, not geographic equality, though some disparities have a geographic element.

The Platform provides a framework for advancing equity. It has been incorporated into Metro's Vision 2028 Strategic Plan and must be a critical factor in our decision making. In 2019, Metro published an Equity Platform FY19 Activation Plan (Attachment B) to highlight the Platform's broad portfolio of current, planned, and conceptual initiatives, and to show the Platform's intent and the distance the agency still has to go to fully realize the Platform's potential and impact for change. In January 2020, Metro welcomed the first Executive Officer, Equity and Race to lead, coordinate, and develop implementation of efforts under the Platform.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The Equity Platform stands on four pillars - Define and Measure, Listen and Learn, Focus and Deliver, and Train and Grow. Progress over the last six months and objectives for the future under

each of the four pillars are outlined below:

**A. Define and Measure**

Under this pillar, we are tasked with defining equity, defining the target communities in need of more equitable transportation investments, determining how to measure disparities and gaps in opportunity, and understanding the benefits and burdens of our services, programs, and policies and how they are shaped by those disparities and gaps.

- 1. Equity Definition** - Since the adoption of the Equity Platform, there has been a growing need to define equity, to help orient Platform efforts, and clarify what equity is and is not in the context of the Platform. Accordingly, Metro has developed the following definition of equity. Moving forward it will be used to orient our work around equity and create project specific equitable outcomes.

“Equity is both an outcome and a process to address racial, socioeconomic, and gender disparities, to ensure fair and just access - with respect to where you begin and your capacity to improve from that starting point - to opportunities, including jobs, housing, education, mobility options, and healthier communities. It is achieved when one’s outcomes in life are not predetermined, in a statistical or experiential sense, on their racial, economic, or social identities. It requires community informed and needs-based provision, implementation, and impact of services, programs, and policies that reduce and ultimately prevent disparities.”

- 2. Defining High Need Areas** - One of the first steps Metro took under this pillar was to try to identify target communities, where strategic transportation investments can have the greatest impact in eliminating disparities. Accordingly, in September 2019, the Board approved the Equity Focused Communities (EFC), as a working definition. This definition has been used in various projects from the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to the Business Solution Center Expansion study to the TOC Implementation Plan. Other projects have created project specific definitions of high need areas, that include some EFC factors (race, income, car ownership), along with additional factors. The NextGen Bus Study and Plan’s Transit Propensity Index is a great example. Moving forward, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race will continue to work with project teams across the agency from the Better Bus Initiative to the Goods Movement Strategic Plan to the Comprehensive Pricing Study, and community members, as they work to understand disparities and needs in the context of their specific projects.

- 3. Agency-wide Equity Assessment** - While it’s important to address the equity impacts of each Metro decision, it’s also important to understand how we are performing at a macro -level, what decisions and strategies would help the agency perform better, and how to prioritize decisions and investments based on equity. To that end, over the next year the Office of Equity and Race will explore development of an agency-wide equity study, to create a baseline understanding of key disparities, challenges, successes, and opportunities, including community and employees perceptions of Metro’s performance related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. We will then use that to inform an Equity Strategic Plan. While there are resource constraints, given the importance of this work, we will consider a phased approach.

**B. Listen and Learn**

Under this pillar Metro must improve its efforts to listen and learn from the communities that we serve, to understand how to better serve them. It pushes us to focus on the needs of those faring the worst, recognizing that opportunity doesn't trickle down, it cascades up, and if we understand how to increase access to opportunity for those faring the worse, we will be able to increase access for all. It also focuses on meaningful community engagement as opposed to outreach. To implement this pillar, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race has joined ongoing projects and engagement efforts, been appointed to lead, partner with, or develop new workgroups, and joined national and local conversations about Equity in transportation and the built environment.

1. **Community Based Organization (CBO) Partnership Strategy** - Responding to lessons learned from the Blue Line, First/Last Mile Plan's transformative approach to partnering with Community Based Organizations, the Communications, Planning, Vendor and Contract Management Departments have continued to prepare a new policy to guide enhanced partnerships with CBOs on several levels, including a clear process for contracting opportunities within Metro's larger public engagement efforts. The Executive Officer, Equity and Race has joined this team and Metro is exploring how her office can support this effort as it moves to implementation.
2. **Community Safety and Security** - Another outgrowth of the work on the Blue Line, First/Last Mile Plan was the formation of the Community Safety and Security Work Group (CSSWG). In early 2019, it was developed to help Metro work with community members to listen to and address neighborhood and rider concerns regarding Metro safety and security. Upon joining Metro, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race was appointed to lead the CSSWG and hosted one meeting in May 2020. In July 2020, the Metro Board directed Metro's Chief Executive Officer to establish a Transit Public Safety Advisory Committee that incorporates the existing CSSWG. As directed the Executive Officer, Equity and Race will work with the Committee, Office of Civil Rights, Executive Officer for Customer Experience, and the Office of Safety, Security, and Law Enforcement to develop a community-based approach to public safety on the transit system.
3. **WHAM Taskforce** - The WHAM Taskforce includes representatives from each of the agencies overseeing Measures W, H, A, and M and its goals are to create efficiencies across the programs, eliminate redundancies, coordinate programmatic and project planning, implement specific multi-benefit projects, and leverage W, H, A, and M funding with existing County and other funding resources. The Executive Officer, Equity and Race is the Metro representative on the task force and will coordinate across the agency to fulfill Metro's tasks under the Taskforce's strategic plan.
4. **Aging Disability Transportation Network (ADTN)** - The ADTN is a coalition of groups working with people with disabilities and older adults, formed in 2017, which emerged through advocacy efforts starting with development of the 2016-2019 Coordinated Plan. The ADTN has partnered with Metro in the development of the Board directed 2019 Aging and Disability Report and the corresponding Forum, and will continue partnering with Metro as we work to draft the next Coordinated Plan and address various recommendations from

the coalition to better support people with disabilities and older adults. The Executive Officer, Equity and Race has been appointed to lead Metro's efforts in partnering with the ADTN and will lead coordination across the agency to support related efforts to better meet the needs of people with disabilities and older adults.

5. **Equity Advisory Board** - While Metro will continue partnering with the Equity Committee of the Policy Advisory Council as a technical advisory body as we work to implement the Equity Platform, we are still exploring the development of an Equity Advisory Board. This board would include Equity thought leaders throughout LA County, California, and potentially, the Country. This would be an interdisciplinary group charged with advising the agency on specific topics and issues with equity concerns, especially those which intersect between transportation and other disciplines and opportunity areas.
6. **National and Local Conversations** - Since joining Metro, the Executive Officer of Equity and Race has been very active in local and national conversations around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Transportation and the Built Environment. She has participated in virtual panels hosted by various industry partners from the American Public Transportation Association to Transit Center to the Rail~volution National Steering Committee. She has also participated in panels hosted by local chapters of industry associations including the American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute, and American Institute of Architects. She has presented to or led conversations with local stakeholder groups from Move-LA and Investing in Place to the San Fernando and Gateway Cities Council of Governments. As implementation of the Equity Platform continues, the Office of Equity and Race will continue participating in national and local conversations to discuss best practices, learn from other experts in the field, build partnerships, and generally support and encourage efforts to advance equity in transportation and the built environment.

C. **Focus and Deliver**

This pillar charges Metro with carrying out processes supported by the Equity Platform objectives and principles, which ensure that our actions, programs, and policies lead to more equitable outcomes. It incorporates what's learned from the first two pillars to help us plan, build, invest, and operate in a manner that removes barriers and supports increased access to opportunity for all.

1. **Equity Tool** - Since January 2020, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race has explored the development of a guiding tool to help Metro consistently identify equity concerns and solutions to improve access to opportunity. While the EFC definition helps define high need communities, the Equity Tool will help support more substantive assessments of impacts on those communities by exploring and answering key questions. While still in the development phase, in its current draft form, the tool is a form with a series of questions to guide Metro in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs, plans, and other decisions. It is based on two ideas: 1) deep-rooted and pervasive racial and socioeconomic inequities exists that create disparate impacts, even when the intention is to help all, and 2) we must understand the root causes of those inequities in order to develop solutions that help those faring the worse to actually improve access to opportunity for all. It's based on

the results-based accountability framework developed by Mark Friedman, which is also the basis of the race equity tools developed by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, in which Metro is a member. During Fiscal Year 2021, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race will work with the Equity Liaisons (see below) and the Equity Committee of the Metro Policy Advisory Council to finalize the draft tool and pilot it on at least three projects.

2. **Rapid Equity Assessment** - Early on during the COVID-19 Crisis, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race recognized the need to center our emergency and fast response decisions on equity. Subsequently, she was appointed as a member of the COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce (Taskforce), and by the second meeting the Taskforce established an equity subcommittee which the Executive Officer, Equity and Race would lead. The committee agreed that they needed a tool to help assess all recommendations that would come from the Taskforce. Initially they explored the draft Equity Tool but determined they needed something simpler for the fast-paced nature of the taskforce process. The Executive Officer, Equity and Race drafted the Rapid Equity Assessment (Attachment C) and worked with the Equity Subcommittee to pilot and fine-tune it. The Rapid Equity Assessment tool has been applied to all Taskforce recommendations and used to help prioritize decisions. In an effort to expand its use, the tool was presented to the Metro Senior Leadership Team. Over the next fiscal year, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race will work with the Equity Liaisons to build capacity to use the Rapid Equity Assessment Tool across the agency, with a goal of eventually requiring use of an equity tool for most Metro decisions.
  
3. **Agency-wide Project Support** - Since the establishment of the Equity Platform, Metro has worked to incorporate its principles into various projects and programs, including some that are at or near completion, such as NextGen, the Understanding How Women Travel Report, and the Long Range Transportation Plan, to name a few. Over the last six months, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race has assisted with new and on-going projects to do the same. From the COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce to the 710 South Project, the Comprehensive Pricing Study to Transit Oriented Communities Implementation Plan and several others, she has worked in roles that range from occasional consulting to regular workgroup membership, to support projects as they explore how to create more inclusive project development processes and plan for equitable project outcomes. These efforts will continue into FY21 and be supplemented as Metro expands Office of Equity and Race and trains its Equity Liaisons and others to support this work.

#### **D. Train and Grow**

This pillar focuses on Metro as an organization and recognizes that successful implementation of the Equity Platform requires commitment, education and training, and prioritization of the Platform's principles across Metro at all levels and in all departments. This pillar will be implemented by efforts of the Office of Equity and Race as well as the Department of Civil Rights and Inclusion in partnership with the Department of Human Capital and Development and other Departments, as applicable.

1. **Agency-wide Education and Conversations** - The Executive Officer, Equity and Race joined Metro in late January, just before the COVID-19 pandemic reached Los Angeles

County and a few months before the civil unrest sparked by the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor began. Between the public health crisis' disproportionate impact on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, the rise in COVID-19 related racist attacks on people of Asian descent, and the spotlighting of historic and present systemic racism and anti-blackness in America, the need and desire to have conversations and develop actions to create a more equitable and inclusive society at Metro have only amplified.

To meet that need and implement this pillar, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race has met with various units and sometimes departments to present on the Equity Platform and discuss how Metro can advance equity through our work. She has also joined the Metro Chief Executive Officer and Chief Civil Rights Officer to facilitate an employee town hall to discuss the civil unrest. She has presented to SLT to introduce the Rapid Equity Assessment and explore eventually requiring an equity section in all board reports.

Metro will work to build the internal infrastructure to support a future required equity section in all board reports, that provides a substantive analysis of a decision's equity impacts. The Executive Officer, Equity and Race will continue meeting with staff across the agency and explore the development of a racial equity training for all staff. In the more immediate, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race is working to launch a voluntary Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Book Club for employees who want to educate and empower themselves to be JEDI advocates.

- 2. Equity Liaisons** - In June 2020, the Executive Officer, Equity and Race established the Equity Liaisons Working Group, which includes one to two staff from each Metro department. The Liaisons were nominated by their respective SLT member and are leaders in their departments, with interest in helping Metro advance equity and a desire to learn and grow. The goal of the Equity Liaison Working Group is to build an internal team of equity fluent leaders to help support implementation of the Equity Platform. The Equity Liaison work plan includes, but is not limited to, learning key concepts related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; being trained to use, help test, and strengthen the application of equity tools; advising on Equity Platform implementation efforts; and helping to identify opportunities and challenges to addressing equity within each department and the agency as a whole. The Equity Liaisons meet regularly and will continue through FY21 and beyond.

In summary, these highlighted initiatives should not be viewed as the only elements that will impact, support, or add to the implementation of the Equity Platform. The Platform will be carried out through an ongoing portfolio of agency actions.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Implementation of the Equity Platform will in many cases involve shaping and adjusting the direction of current projects within existing budgets. In other cases, it will require new activities and program development. Metro will need to build the staff infrastructure and provide sufficient resources to support all Equity Platform implementation activities. Where a proposed equity-based initiative requires stand-alone revenues, a separate budget action would be taken.

### **Impact to Budget**

There is no impact to the existing extended FY19-20 budget as a result of this Receive and File

report.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

This recommendation supports strategic plan goals #1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 by helping Metro to target infrastructure and service investments toward those with the greatest needs and enhancing communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity. Implementation of the equity framework is an explicit recommended action under the goals 1.1 and 3.3, and it supports actions under 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4.

### **NEXT STEPS**

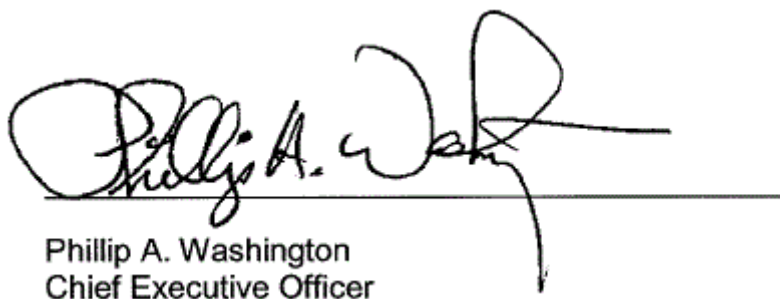
Staff will report on milestones achieved on individual Equity Platform actions and provide overall updates on an ongoing basis, as appropriate.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A - Metro Equity Platform Report
- Attachment B - Equity Platform FY19 Activation Plan
- Attachment C - Rapid Equity Assessment Tool

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