**American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials**

**Special Committee on Research and Innovation**

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT TITLE

Incorporating Equity into Programming Decisions at Departments of Transportation

1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to understand how programs of projects contribute to achieving transportation equity and determine how to adjust current programming processes to achieve more equitable outcomes.

The following research tasks will support the main objective:

Task 1: Define program equity. Review literature and conduct targeted outreach to state DOTs to identify current definitions of equity and performance measures related to equity. Task 2: Evaluate current system performance against equity outcome-based programming principles. Determined potential equity-based outcome measures. Use a case study to evaluate existing system performance measures compared to an equity outcome-based measure.

Task 3: Identify programming processes that advance transportation equity. Develop a list of potential improvements and propose specific additional tools, analytical methods and other information that would be needed to meet the needs of state DOT more fully.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND NEED FOR RESEARCH

While many states have committed to transportation equity, a critical gap exists in understanding how programs of projects contribute to achieving transportation equity. Currently, most programming uses an asset management lens, which assumes the existing system continues to meet evolving needs. However, newer state and federal goals reflect a holistic, bigger picture focus than asset management. Recent statewide multimodal transportation plans reflect this shift with ambitious safety, equity, and sustainability targets. Maintaining the current programming approach may hinder the ability to achieve these goals.

Recently, the federal government committed to the Justice 40 program which states that 40% of benefits from specific federal programs will go towards disadvantaged communities. This new federal initiative has increased interest from state DOTs in how to measure equity in transportation.

1. LITERATURE SEARCH SUMMARY

Literature exists on equity in transportation focused on policy and project decisions, or specifically federal grant programs. Research is needed that focuses on incorporating equity into broader programming decisions at state DOTs. (Note: we can add short summaries about these in further revisions to this RNS).

Existing literature about transportation equity includes:

* Elevating Equity in Transportation Decision Making: Recommendations for Federal Competitive Grant programs (2024) <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27439/elevating-equity-in-transportation-decision-making-recommendations-for-federal-competitive-grant-programs>
* NCHRP Project 20-05 Synthesis Topic 53-01 Practices to Promote Equity in Transportation Funding (2023) <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/53-01/FinalReport.pdf>
* NCHRP 20-123(19) A Research Roadmap for Institutionalizing Transportation Equity [Active] Support for AASHTO Committees and Councils <https://trid.trb.org/view/2011425>
* Tools to Integrate Equity into Active Transportation and Safety Investments <http://apps.trb.org/cmsfeed/TRBNetProjectDisplay.asp?ProjectID=5128>
* Transportation Equity Project Prioritization Criteria (2020)

1. URGENCY AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Equity is increasingly a key goal for state DOTs and the federal government. In addition to the federal commitment to Justice 40, many state DOTs are coming to terms with their past actions that have caused harms in disadvantaged communities throughout the country and are seeking remedies. States and local communities have adopted commitments to transportation equity to address on-going inequities in transportation. The social unrest in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd showed the impact that entrenched inequities can have on the population. The resulting outrage fueled the desire for a greater focus on equity across the country.

State DOTs spend billions of dollars every year on transportation projects across the country. This investment has the ability to greatly benefit disadvantaged communities and reduce existing inequitable outcomes if DOTs and other transportation providers are able to evaluate and measure their program in regards to equity. Transportation access is necessary for employment and improved transportation access greatly improves job opportunities and access to other important destinations.

1. ALIGNMENT WITH THE 2021-2026 AASHTO STRATEGIC PLAN

This project is aligned with the AASHTO Vision to provide improved quality of life through leadership in transportation and the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. The project would advance the goals and objectives identified in the AASHTO Strategic Plan. Under the goal of safety, mobility and access for everyone, nearly every objective is aligned with this research but especially advancing equity and social justice. This project would also support a number of strategies in the Strategic Plan, including developing policies and providing resources that support ensuring access to transportation systems for everyone applying scenario planning to better weigh options in decision-making.

1. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The research would be beneficial to state DOT professionals at any level as well as transportation organization partners and stakeholders who all have a vested interest in improving equity in transportation and overall. Implementation elements include a communications plan to ensure awareness of the research and TRB, FHWA and AASHTO presentations to share the findings. Venues include workshops, peer exchanges, and committee meetings.

There are several other AASHTO and TRB committees interested in transportation’s contribution toward equity that would likely support this project, including:

* AASHTO
  + Committee on Performance Based Management (CPBM) – Christos Xenophontos, Chair
  + Committee on Planning
* TRB
  + Committee on Equity in Transportation (AME10)
  + Performance Management (AJE20) - Michael Grant, Chair
  + Strategic Management (AJE10)
  + Transportation Planning Policy and Processes (AEP10)
  + Transportation Planning Analysis and Application (AEP15)

a.       Communication and Implementation Funding: $20,000

b.       Communication and Implementation Period: 6 months

c.       AASHTO requirement for interim deliverable review:

i.      Interim deliverable(s): The results of this research are critically important to the DOTs. As such, an interim deliverable is required to be reviewed by the applicable AASHTO Committee(s). The AASHTO Committee on Performance Based Management has developed and sponsored this needs statement on behalf of member DOTs. Interim deliverables could include literature reviews, surveys, interim reports, and full draft reports.

ii.      Stakeholder engagement: As part of the interim deliverable, the project team and research panel should engage DOT stakeholders for feedback during the project. Engagement could include webinars, workshops, presentations, surveys, user testing of draft tools, and interim reports and literature reviews.

1. RECOMMENDED RESEARCH FUNDING AND RESEARCH PERIOD
   1. Research Funding: $400,000
   2. Research Period: 24 months
2. HAS THIS PROBLEM STATEMENT OR A DIFFERENT VERSION OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT BEEN SUBMITTED TO NCHRP BEFORE? IF YES, WHAT YEAR(s)?

NO

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT AUTHOR(s): *For each author, provide their name, affiliation, email address and phone.*

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1. POTENTIAL PANEL MEMBER(S): *For each panel member, provide their name, affiliation, email address and phone.*

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1. REQUIRED KEYWORDS/TERMS: *3 required keywords derived from the Transportation Research Thesaurus.*

Transportation equity (may need some help with this; thesaurus does not have words like “programming” or “program of projects”)

1. OPTIONAL KEYWORDS/TERMS: *3 additional “free text” keywords or terms.*

Equity in program of projects

1. PERSON SUBMITTING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

**⮚END⮘**