

To: Transportation Ordinance Review Committee

From: Anne Benishek-Clark, Christy Bachmann and Ann Schroeder
RESJ Core Team Representatives

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Re: Naming Race and Amplifying Marginalized Voices in the Revision of the Transportation Ordinance

The words “equity” and “equitable” can mean many things. Without agreeing upon a common definition, well-meaning people can be working at cross purposes. The City of Madison, through their Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) has adapted the definition from policylink.org:

*Equity is **just** and **fair** inclusion into a society in which all, including all racial and ethnic groups, can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equity gives all people a just and fair shot in life despite historic patterns of racial and economic exclusion.*

The stated mission of RESJI is to “*Establish racial equity and social justice as a core principle in all decisions, policies and functions of the City of Madison.*” The City of Madison has chosen to lead with race and be specific. Studies have shown that diversity and other efforts that don’t specifically name race fail to benefit people of color and sometimes even make the existing inequities worse.

This excerpt from the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE), of which Madison is a member, explains.

Why Lead with Race?

The Alliance leads with race, with the recognition that the creation and perpetuation of racial inequities has been baked into government, and that racial inequities across all indicators for success are deep and pervasive. We also know that other groups of people are still marginalized, including based on gender, sexual orientation, ability and age, to name but a few. Focusing on racial equity provides the opportunity to introduce a framework, tools and resources that can also be applied to other areas of marginalization. This is important because:

- To have maximum impact, focus and specificity are necessary. Strategies to achieve racial equity differ from those to achieve equity in other areas. “One-size-fits all” strategies are rarely successful.
- A racial equity framework that is clear about the differences between individual, institutional and structural racism, as well as the history and current reality of inequities, has applications for other marginalized groups.
- Race can be an issue that keeps other marginalized communities from effectively coming together. An approach that recognizes the inter-connected ways in which marginalization takes place will help to achieve greater unity across communities.

The Portland, OR Metro Strategic Plan says, “By addressing the barriers experienced by people of color, we will effectively also identify solutions and remove barriers for other disadvantaged groups.” (See plan excerpt attached.) If we are going to include racial equity in all decisions, policies and functions of the city as stated in the RESJI mission, we must make this clear and use consistent language in policies such as ordinances.

Another critical factor for including racial equity in this ordinance review is to keep in mind methods to amplify voices that are often marginalized. We can't just include the term "racial equity," we have to include strategies that will work toward racial equity. One primary way to do this would be to include people of color, people with low incomes and transit dependent people as specified members of transportation related boards, committees and commissions. This might require thinking about committees in a different way (i.e. accessible meeting places, support services such as child care or taxi vouchers, etc.) In addition, streamlining boards/committees/commissions would facilitate meaningful participation as much as possible. There are few people who have unlimited time and resources to devote to serving on committees, their subcommittees and study groups. When we operate in that structure, only people with the ability to devote that kind of time are involved, and those are not the only people we need to hear from. By using various methods to streamline committee work, more people can be meaningfully involved. This will also help committees set priorities across different transportation modes to benefit our community the most rather than create transportation mode silos. Some ideas are:

- Combine committees (subcommittees, commissions, etc.) wherever possible
- Decrease frequency of meetings and limit length of meetings. This can be done by:
 - Strong committee leadership
 - Efficient agendas
 - Focused discussions
- Broad representation on committees with representation from:
 - People of color
 - Various income levels
 - Types of transportation used (i.e. transit dependent members)

While it can be difficult to recruit members for city committees, using the racial equity analysis tool to review our recruitment process and considering these suggestions could help:

- Targeted recruitments valuing community knowledge and experience equal to historical technical knowledge in order for a balanced committee
- Consider term limits of less than 10 years that are uniformly enforced so more voices are included

Finally, consider ad hoc committees to study an issue and make recommendations as needed rather than having standing committees that meet regularly for specific issues.

For the most part, the City of Madison has taken a traditional approach to community engagement. We have meetings convenient to us and make people come to us if they want to provide feedback within our specified parameters. Racial equity requires us to move beyond this inform/consult model.

Added for TPC 5/10/17: Changing this engagement model could include making it possible for different people to be involved as city committee members such as offering child care, transportation assistance (taxi vouchers), stipends, having meetings in different locations and going to existing community meeting for feedback about specific items.