



COMMON GROUND

CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACES AND ISSUES IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION | WINTER 2014

A Historic Vote for Transportation Equity

by Dave Van Hattum, Transit for Livable Communities Advocacy Director

On September 17, the region's **Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)** took a historic vote to include equity considerations in its scoring of project funding applications. The new equity points, among points in a number of traditional transportation criteria (usage, age of facility, etc.), do two essential things. One, they give a slight preference to projects (roads, transit and bicycle/pedestrian) benefitting people of color, people living in poverty, and especially people in racially concentrated areas of poverty. Second, they connect transportation and housing outcomes, by aligning points with efforts by cities and counties to increase the availability of affordable housing.



The TAB, in coordination with the Metropolitan Council, allocates approximately \$150 million in flexible (across mode and geography) federal transportation funds every two years. Because transportation needs in the region far exceed funding available from a variety of sources, the selection of projects is very competitive. The 33-member TAB, per federal rule, is made up of a majority of local elected officials from both city and county government



TLC's Advocacy Director Dave Van Hattum, pictured with Jewish Community Action Executive Director Vic Rosenthal

as well as appointed citizen, agency, and multi-modal representatives.

Substantive change is never easy, and leadership for this change can be attributed to many players: A strong group of reform advocates on the TAB, including my fellow transit and bike/walk representatives; new and seasoned elected officials appointed to the TAB who knew their

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The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a coalition of grassroots organizations that work together to advance racial, economic and environmental justice in economic growth and land development in the Twin Cities region.

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 District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
 Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota
 The Family Partnership
 Fresh Energy
 Harrison Neighborhood Association
 HOME Line
 Housing Preservation Project
 Jewish Community Action
 Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota
 League of Women Voters of Minnesota
 Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers
 Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing
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 Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
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 Saint Paul Area Coalition for the Homeless
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 Somali Action Alliance
 Summit Academy OIC
 Transit for Livable Communities
 Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation
 West Side Community Organization
 Women's Environmental Institute

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From the Director's Desk

Community Groups Build Power for Transit Equity

This spring and summer, community leaders, the media and public officials entered into a long discussion over whether the Southwest light rail project was positioned to leverage economic opportunity outcomes for people of color. The drama inherent with this debate became a rallying point for 30 community-based organizations and their allied partner groups. We decided to make an equity case for this project and its potential to extend beyond the rails.



Equity Commitments for SWLRT

The Alliance led a coalition of community-based groups and environmental allies, who fashioned a set of Equity Commitments for the Southwest LRT, which outlined the specific measures that could be taken to ensure equitable outcomes from the project. Some critics contended that the rail project was a “suburban commuter train” that would offer no benefits to the people of Minneapolis. The Equity Commitments coalition thought this view was wrong, yet noted that project planners had failed to apply a racial justice lens to the project.

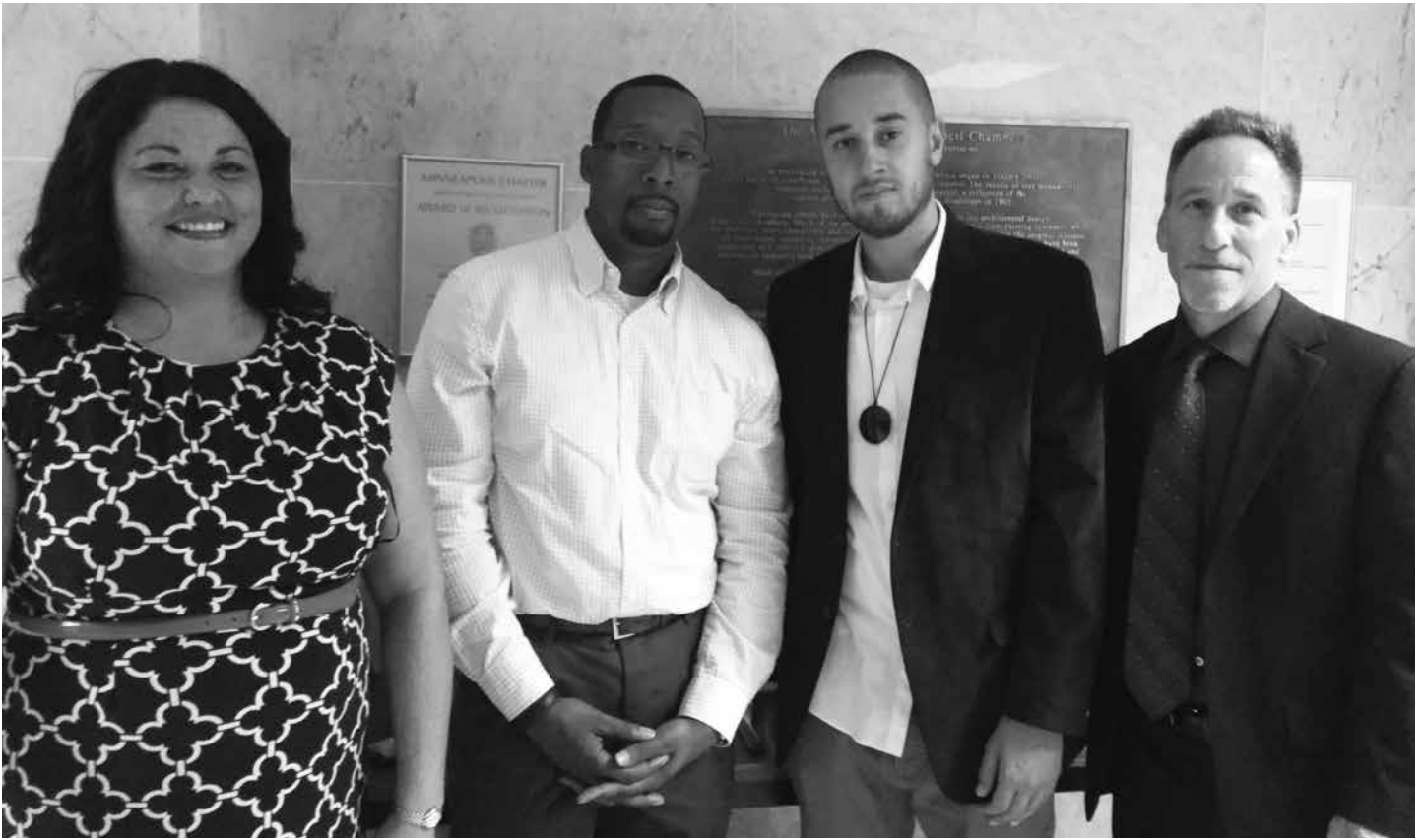
*Enhancements
 and commitments
 are needed to
 ensure equitable
 outcomes from the
 Southwest LRT*

We pointed out that there were some equity goals already included in the project, such as a 32 percent target for hiring construction workers of color. We also recognized that more enhancements were needed to apply an equity focus on all aspects of the transitway–urban planning, project construction, station area development, neighborhood amenities and linking up to the entire transit system.

Our coalition made a compelling case that officials needed to specifically identify how the community would benefit from development activities, job creation systems, business incubation, land-use planning and transit rerouting.

Local Connections, Regional Significance

Labeling the Southwest LRT as strictly a suburban investment also ignored the larger transit system being developed for our region. Critics missed the important role that bus, street car, pedestrian and bike connections would play in weaving a robust web of physical access and connectivity for Minneapolis residents. Moreover, the project is a regional asset that will tie into the Green and Blue lines, and link to regular and enhanced rapid bus service corridors.



From left, Equity Commitments campaign leaders Marika Pfefferkorn and Aasim Shabazz pose with Alliance Coalition Organizer Owen Duckworth and Executive Director Russ Adams after the Minneapolis City Council granted municipal consent on the Southwest LRT project.

At the four public hearings held by the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County and the city of Minneapolis, community groups and resident leaders effectively neutralized the well organized opposition to the project, arguing that the Southwest LRT would only be successful with additional commitments to equity, but it should nonetheless be approved and move forward.

Transit Equity Enhancements and Systems Improvements

During this process, the Equity Commitments coalition successfully negotiated with the Met Council to measure and quantify the bus shelter gap in communities of color and to fashion a strategy to begin closing it. For example, eligibility standards for new shelters at urban and suburban bus stops were a minimum of 40 and 25 boardings per day, respectively. There is no rational basis for this double standard and leaders at the Met Council committed to leveling the criteria. Overall, the region has approximately a 400-shelter gap and the Met Council is pledging to eliminate the gap starting in low-wealth communities of color.

Thanks to a Ladders of Opportunity grant from the Federal Transit Administration, which was just secured by the Met Council, we'll have an excellent opportunity to significantly close the

shelter gap. The Alliance and our partner groups urged the Met Council to pursue the grant not just to address the shelter issue but also to create a community engagement process to inform and impact the agency's Transit Improvement Plan (TIP), build deeper relationships with transit riders, and surface ways to improve regular route bus service and the ridership experience in general. The Met Council has also agreed to redirect some of these grant funds into a community engagement program to directly contract and partner with on-the-ground place-based organizations, which was a key request from our coalition.

The Alliance and the rest of the Equity Commitments coalition remain hopeful that this work will lead to significant investments in North Minneapolis and other communities of color along the Southwest LRT. We know that this initiative can be a model for other parts of our region, and discussions about the equity commitments have already expanded beyond the Southwest corridor. We intend to apply the lessons and outcomes of this initiative to the broader transit system.

Russ Adams

HIRE MINNESOTA

HIRE Minnesota Asks State Contractor to Hire People of Color

Advocacy makes a difference. Over the last five years, HIRE Minnesota has been working with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to ensure more people of color are hired on Minnesota's road, bridge and transit-way projects. Each month, HIRE Minnesota facilitates a group of stakeholders, including prime contractors, women- and minority-owned businesses, labor unions, training institutions, government agencies and community advocates who review MnDOT contractors' workforce reports on hiring people of color.

When we first started work with MnDOT, the agency only shared a list of the top 10 projects with this table of stakeholders. At our urging, the agency later expanded to 15 projects. Now, through our hard work and advocacy for improved systems, we are able to access data for the state's 70 largest projects.

This new list immediately paid dividends. With more comprehensive data, we are able to analyze multiple projects by individual contractors to see how that particular business is doing across the

board, not just on one isolated project. We noticed that one contractor was falling significantly behind the goals: C.S. McCrossan. McCrossan had four active projects and was nowhere near the goal of hiring 32 percent people of color on any of them. In addition, the contractor was only meeting the goal of 6 percent for women on one project.

When we approached McCrossan to discuss our concerns, we did not receive a satisfactory response. So we decided to take action. We organized a protest on a McCrossan worksite and started spreading word of this protest in the community. Apparently, the news got to MnDOT and McCrossan as well, because they immediately responded. MnDOT, in particular, wanted to find another way to resolve the issue. They proposed hosting a meeting to allow HIRE Minnesota to share our concerns with McCrossan. We decided we would give them the chance to meet.

Tom McCrossan, president of C.S. McCrossan, came to the meeting ready to work. He said he had not realized how bad his company's hiring performance was, but that now he was going to step up and lead from within.



HIRE Minnesota leaders developed a plan with C.S. McCrossan to ensure the firm hires more people of color in the future.

Together, we decided that HIRE Minnesota would train McCrossan to use a tool that we developed in the past to create workforce projections. By the end of the year McCrossan will release information showing where the gaps in their workforce will be in 2015. McCrossan will then use that data to work with training organizations to fill their needs and begin to

meet goals. McCrossan will ensure its subcontractors are meeting goals as well. The company will also start to work with educational institutions to create a stronger pipeline for people of color to enter the industry. Finally, McCrossan will hire a staff person whose job is to ensure all of these steps are implemented.

Years of advocacy with MnDOT and its contractors have created improved systems that allow us to achieve better results for people of color. In particular, organizing people who are affected by the issues gets people's attention. We are proud that we always come prepared with solutions, and we are looking forward to working with McCrossan as it implements its commitments to hiring a more diverse workforce.

HIRE MINNESOTA

HIRE Minnesota Goes Back to its Roots



HIRE Minnesota and Summit Academy OIC students filled the room at a MAC hearing.

HIRE Minnesota is going back to its roots by turning its focus to a green jobs project. The Minnesota Airports Commission (MAC) is undertaking a \$25 million solar panel development project that is projected to create **250 jobs**. The project is subject to the state's 32 percent hiring goal for people of color, which could mean **80 jobs and an estimated \$2.7 million in wages** for workers of color. HIRE Minnesota and Summit Academy OIC have testified at MAC meetings, and we were joined by our long-time supporter Will Steger in our call for workforce equity. "Environmental justice is not just about renewable energy, it's also about economic justice," said HIRE Minnesota Campaign Director Avi Viswanathan. The MAC is now putting together a workforce report and has committed to discussing equity issues at future public meetings.

"Environmental justice is not just about renewable energy, it's also about economic justice."



Vikings Stadium Hiring on the Right Track

Six months into the construction of the new Minnesota Vikings stadium, HIRE Minnesota has learned that **workers of color have performed 37 percent of the hours on the project**. So far, we are exceeding the state's 32 percent hiring goal. HIRE Minnesota and the project's Employment Assistance Firm, led by Summit Academy OIC, have helped recruit, train and advocate for workers of color. We estimate that workers of color have earned **\$3.9 million in wages** to date. We will continue to monitor progress on the project—as well as on others throughout the region—to ensure that ALL projects (even those that aren't the highest profile) meet goals for hiring people of color.

Equity in Place: How Community Groups Are Shaping Investment in the Twin Cities Region

Equity in Place is a diverse group of strategic partners from place-based, housing, and advocacy organizations convened by the Alliance and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). Together with our other partners at the Equity in Place table, we believe that everyone in the Twin Cities region deserves to live where they want to live and have access to opportunity.

The table was formed in 2012, when the Metropolitan Council was tasked with completing a regional assessment called the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA). The FHEA was a first-of-its-kind process, mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to identify where opportunities existed (and didn't) in the Twin Cities region, with particular attention to low-wealth communities of color.

Early drafts of the FHEA did not offer a historical analysis of the factors and decisions that have led to racial and spatial inequities. Equity in Place asked the Met Council to tell a more complete story of how disparities were created and reinforced in our region. We stressed the need to clarify that "access" to opportunities such as good jobs, housing, health and education, was very different than "proximity" to those resources.

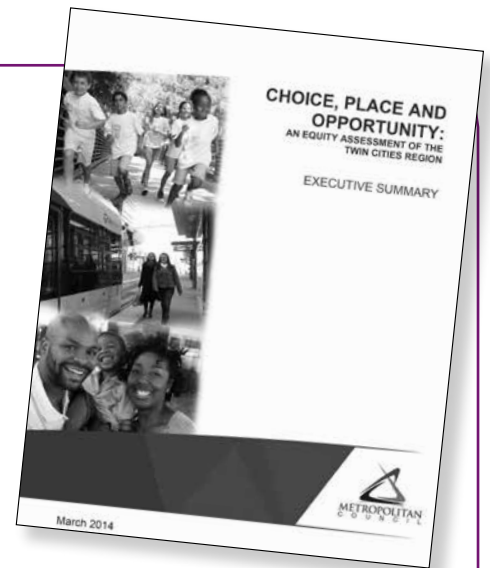
We also knew that how our regional problems were framed and defined would influence how future solutions would be developed. We pushed a narrative that named institutional racism and decades of disinvestment as key causes of concentrated poverty in communities of color. The resulting plan, called *Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities Region*, goes into greater depth detailing the history of each community. It also names the factors, including explicit references to institutional racism, that tell a more complete story of how the Twin Cities region got to this point.

The Met Council has committed to working with Equity in Place to design a process that will engage multiple jurisdictions and community organizations to create reinvestment strategies in historically disinvested communities. Improved community engagement practices will set up the potential for a shift in resources and policy

that will contribute to future investment in communities of color.

Equity in Place was able to shift the narrative about engagement and investment in communities of color in the Twin Cities region. Our work changed the agenda for the region and influenced decisions that will create healthier communities. Together, we helped reinforce the idea that government can't make decisions about people without their involvement, and that low-wealth communities and communities of color are not a problem to be solved or a deficit to our region—they are an asset and a part of the solution.

To read *Choice, Place and Opportunity* visit <http://bit.ly/1mE7HXa>.



Equity in Place is a coalition convened and supported by the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

Other members include:

African Career, Education & Resource, Inc., Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Center, Community Stabilization Project, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Hope Community, Housing Preservation Project, La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles, Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, Native American Community Development Institute, New American Academy, Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Minnesotans Standing Together to End Poverty and West Side Community Organization.

Move MN Seeks Investment in Minnesota's Transportation System

The 2014 legislative session ended this spring without a major new infusion of funding for our regional transit system. It also ended, however, with a strong coalition of more than 200 organizations that joined together to pass a comprehensive transportation bill. The Alliance helped the coalition, called MoveMN, make gains in securing diverse leadership from transit advocates, labor, health equity groups and place-based organizations.

We are now gearing up toward what we hope will be a fruitful 2015 session. Alongside investments in roads and bridges, we will advocate for a 3/4-cent increase in the sales tax to invest in bus service and transitway expansion. This would allow our region to build out our entire transitway system, including LRT and BRT, in 15 years rather than the 30 or more years currently projected. It would also avoid the regular biannual exercise of competing for dollars from the state's general fund to support transit operational and system needs.

One telling sign of our progress in creating public support for the effort: both major political parties have made passing a new transportation bill in 2015 a first-tier fall campaign issue, although with different modal emphasis. Some potential softening of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's position on financing mechanisms is also cause for optimism.



The MoveMN campaign geared up for the legislative season by educating people at the Minnesota State Fair.

One thing is certain: we will need organized community involvement to ensure the equitable deployment of those resources on an accelerated timeline when it does pass. MoveMN member Summit Academy OIC is now leading an effort to secure grassroots support for transportation investment in communities of color, particularly in North Minneapolis. The work of the Southwest LRT Equity Commitments coalition and the likely infusion of funds into community-based organizations through our region's Ladders of Opportunity grant (see story on page 2) will also further the case that future transitway investments should yield tangible, measurable and equitable outcomes.

To learn more about our state's transportation needs or to join the effort, go to www.movemn.org.

Alliance Executive Director Russ Adams talks to Minnesota State Fair-goers about equitable transportation investment.



North Minneapolis Greenway: Survey Results Are In!

Over the last year, the Alliance teamed up with the city of Minneapolis and 13 organizations in North Minneapolis to conduct outreach and engagement around the proposed North Minneapolis Greenway. Our collective aim was to inform residents about the greenway project and to explore whether it was a desired amenity for their community.

We designed an outreach process that intentionally included people of color, immigrants, renters, people with disabilities, seniors and youth from the community. This was a key and fundamental component of the project, given the history of disinvestment and underrepresentation of North Minneapolis residents in decision-making processes. For far too long in our region, the wisdom and expertise of people of color has not been sought when considering where infrastructure investments should take place. We are shifting this dominant paradigm by supporting people of color in a process to decide whether the greenway is built and how it is designed if constructed.

In July, community-based organizations collected 2,040 surveys, 1,331 of which were from North Minneapolis residents. Of the North Minneapolis residents who completed the survey, 26 percent were renters and 55 percent were people of color. In previous engagement processes related to the greenway, only 4 percent of residents were renters and very few of the survey respondents were of color. Of people who lived in North Minneapolis, 60 percent supported the greenway idea and 24 percent opposed it, for reasons ranging from not being able to park in front of their homes to concerns over the potential increase in property taxes such development could bring.

The Alliance and our partners have more work to do to ensure that this process is truly representative of the diversity of North Minneapolis. While we have made significant progress in hearing from the many cultural constituencies in the community, our survey results also tell us that whites are overrepresented and African Americans are underrepresented. There are also key areas along the route where there are gaps in participation. We will continue to work with our partners to seek input from a representative sample of residents so that the project reflects the views and ideas of people who live along the future greenway.

2,040

surveys completed

70%

respondents are North Minneapolis residents

70%

of all respondents support the Greenway idea

276

respondents live directly on the Greenway route

60%

of these respondents support the Greenway on their blocks

Community Groups Help Set Regional Standards for Community Engagement

Every major transitway project managed by the Metropolitan Council has a community engagement process that allows residents to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns. For several years, the Community Engagement Steering Committee (CESC), staffed by the Alliance and the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, has come together to improve regional standards on community engagement. These leaders noticed many inconsistencies in how community engagement was implemented throughout the Twin Cities region's transitway development projects managed by the Met Council. CESC members were concerned that these inconsistencies were creating an unfair playing field along our transit corridors, hindering their ability to effectively influence the decision-making process in their communities.

The CESC spent much of the last year organizing to change the Met Council's community engagement policies and practices. After a year of negotiations, the CESC and Met Council senior staff agreed to a series of monthly meetings to rewrite the Metropolitan Council's Public Participation Plan. That plan was a federal requirement for local transportation planning, which advised how the Met Council would engage residents around developments slated for their communities. As a result of the input and direction of the CESC, the new plan will be called the Public Engagement Plan and will now cover all Met Council activities instead of being limited to transportation planning. The final draft of the Public Engagement Plan is expected to be approved by the Met Council in early 2015.

The CESC's expectation is that this new Public Engagement Plan will not only guide the Metropolitan Council's community engagement policies and practices, but will also guide other local government agencies within our region. Land use and transit planning is a collaborative process that involves multiple layers of governmental authorities. As the Met Council forges a new, more inclusive pathway, CESC leaders and their allies will continue to reach out to local planners to ensure more agencies are implementing these best practices for inclusion in transitway planning.



Members of the CESC who helped create the Public Engagement Plan.

STOPS FOR US Coalition Celebrates Green Line Opening



Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff celebrated the opening of the Green Line with members of the **Stops for Us** coalition.

The Stops coalition is nationally recognized for our work to advocate for federal policy change that allowed three missing stops to be added to the Green Line to serve some of our region's most reliable transit riders—low-wealth people and people of color.

Watch a video about the Stops for Us victory at <http://bit.ly/1zhXuFL>.

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We believe that future allocation of federal transportation dollars should reflect geographical balance, but also tangibly contribute to reducing racial and economic disparities.

vote for equity would be on the right side of history; and bold agency voices who embraced that transportation is ultimately about serving people. Fair housing advocates also played a key role in achieving a scoring system that rewards localities doing their fair share to provide affordable housing. Equity advocates contacted TAB members and showed up to provide critical support for this vote. Metropolitan Council staff also contributed key data, shared experiences from other metropolitan regions, and educated TAB members about the equity proposal.

Finally, Kenya McKnight, District D Citizen Representative (one of only two people of color on the TAB and an Alliance board member) spoke for increasing equitable access in her North Minneapolis community and across the metro region. Despite strong opposition to change, McKnight powerfully

conveyed that social equity considerations were appropriate given past disinvestment in low-income communities, and would contribute to better access to opportunity for all residents in our growing, and increasingly diverse, metropolitan region.

The ultimate test of this policy change will be seen next spring when a new slate of projects is evaluated and selected for funding. Opponents fear this policy change will shortchange their communities. TLC, the Alliance and our partners believe that future allocation of federal transportation dollars should reflect geographical balance, but also tangibly contribute to reducing racial and economic disparities in our region. We will be among the proponents watching closely to ensure that new scoring for equity considerations results in more equitable distribution of these federal funds.

MEMBER PROFILE: *Fresh Energy*

Fresh Energy is an organization working at the intersection of energy efficiency, transportation, land use, and the environment to bring about clean energy solutions. The organization does this by advocating for and implementing practical policies that promote equity, sustainability and access to choice.

"In a lot of our work, we focus on how we can improve our neighborhoods and economy in a way that advances sustainability," says Shawnterra Hardy, the organization's transportation and built environment director. "We take a systems change perspective in what we do...We need a new system that takes into account the changes in demographics, land-use planning and the way that people get around."

Fresh Energy also works to ensure that public policies are rooted in equitable values. For Hardy, this comes back to how transportation is designed in this region. "How do we increase investments in biking and walking in neighborhoods that don't have access? How do all neighborhoods get their fair share of infrastructure improvements?" she asked. "I believe that if we want to provide more access to transportation options, we have to build a system that is comprehensive and allows everyone to have choice."



Shawnterra Hardy of Fresh Energy

ASK OUR MEMBERS:

What would increased transportation investment mean for your communities?



Increased transportation funding would **increase the quality of life for people in my community**. I have a godson who is 22 years old, has three kids and relies solely on public transportation to navigate our region. He has encountered many challenges, from picking up his children from daycare on time to getting to work because of the limited transportation that is available to him. His experience has helped me to see that transportation impacts every aspect of life, including the ability to provide for one's family. Increased funding would give people like him **more options to get to where they need to go when they need to get there**.

– Karen Monahan, Sierra Club



“An increase in transportation investment would **allocate more money to the Southwest corridor**, which will run through my community in Eden Prairie. If done in the right way, this investment has the potential to create more authentic, equitable transportation development programs that **connect people to housing, jobs and other resources**. An investment like that would significantly benefit the people in my community.”

– Asad Aliweyd, New American Academy



“Increased investments in transportation could potentially **support people who want to organize themselves to make street infrastructure happen**, particularly around **creating more bike/pedestrian options**. For the Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition, this would also mean forming a network of protected bikeways throughout the region, which would make biking not only more accessible, but safer, too.”

– Laura Kling, Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition



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