

Advancing Transportation Equity: Community Conversations – Phase 1 (Pilot)

In the recently updated Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, the Minnesota Department of Transportation committed to “study how transportation affects equity and identify transportation strategies that will meaningfully reduce disparities.” The following proposed project would be an early step in implementing this work plan item.

This project is meant to be a pilot to test a proposed engagement strategy. The pilot will focus on communities within one MnDOT district. Overall, the proposed engagement strategy is modeled off of the process developed for the Manufacturers’ Perspectives work.

Goals & assumptions

- Individuals and groups understand equity differently. We want to know how others define it.
- The perception of inequitable outcomes or processes is a valid concern. We want to hear what those perceived issues and inequities are.
- Transportation is a contributing factor to the achievement of many broader societal outcomes. We want to hear from groups and individuals about how transportation helps or hinders their lives, what their key concerns are and what potential solutions they’d like to see.
- We are doing this work to better serve all Minnesotans. They should have the ability to influence the direction of our work.
- There are other groups already working on advancing equity. We want to learn from and partner with them.
- We need to better understand the issues and experiences of underserved communities in Minnesota in order to identify and inform future actions MnDOT will take to advance equity in Minnesota.

How this relates to other work

This project is not a standalone effort. It is part of a more comprehensive MnDOT initiative focused on advancing transportation equity. Other closely related work items include:

- **Research & Literature/Program Review:** A complementary and simultaneous effort focused on learning about existing conditions from a quantitative, research-based perspective. This project is being completed through a separate consultant contract.
- **MnDOT Process Review:** A complementary and ongoing effort focused on changing internal MnDOT policies and practices related to equity. This work is led by MnDOT.

Budget & timeline

The consultant budget for this project is up to \$150,000. A draft project timeline is identified below:

- Spring/Summer 2017: MnDOT background work
- Fall 2017: Scope of work developed
- Winter 2018: Contracting process and begin work
- Spring/Summer 2018: Preliminary results shared
- Fall 2018: Final report completed

Scope of work

Task 1: Project management

Work with the MnDOT project team to direct and manage the project tasks, schedule and budget. Ensure deliverables are met. Coordinate and attend regular meetings with the MnDOT project team.

Deliverables: Regular project team meetings; monthly invoices and progress reports

Task 2: Prepare interview questions

Work with the MnDOT project team to identify the key topics to discuss with interviewees. Develop a list of specific questions related to these topics. Questions should be general enough to allow for open discussion but be able to be used as a conversation guide as needed. Also, develop and document an overall structure for the interview process. While consistency is preferred, the interview questions and structure should be able to adapt to the specific needs and preferences of different communities.

Deliverables: List of key topics and specific questions; documentation of overall structure for interview process

Task 3: Identify interviewees

Perform demographic analysis and consult with MnDOT Central Office and District staff to identify key communities to engage with. Special attention should be paid in the analysis and selection of communities to areas of overlapping vulnerability. Identify community groups, organizations and agencies that work with and/or represent these communities within the region, including identifying the appropriate contacts at each. Develop invitation letters to send to the identified groups/organizations/agencies. The MnDOT project team will send the formal invitations. The goal is for 30 to 50 interviews but the exact number will be based on the characteristics of the district.

Deliverables: Demographic analysis of the region; list of potential key communities; list of potential interviewees with contact information; draft invitation letters

Task 4: Schedule interviews

Schedule interviews with contacts identified in Task 3. Coordinate with relevant staff – MnDOT and potential partners – to ensure schedule availability and identify specific individuals to cover each interview. Ideally, there will be two primary staff assigned to lead each interview. Other MnDOT staff and/or external partners may occasionally attend in an observation role. Recognizing that communities have different cultural norms and relationships with Minnesota government, special attention should be given to identifying the appropriate staff for each interview. This may include contracting with additional vendors for specific services, such as trusted advocates or language specialists.

Deliverables: Schedule of interviews with specific staff assignments identified

Task 5: Train interviewers

Develop a training for all staff that will be conducting interviews. The training should cover the project goals, interview structure, materials, schedule and other relevant topics. Create any materials necessary for the training. Conduct two interviewer training sessions in the district and include options for individuals to attend remotely. Interviewers will be a mix of staff from MnDOT Central Office, MnDOT District, the consultant, and outside partners.

Deliverables: Interviewer training plan; interviewer training materials; two interviewer training sessions

Task 6: Conduct interviews

The majority of interviews will be conducted by MnDOT staff. However, the consultant will be expected to participate in up to five interviews in order to understand the process and the data that is collected. Ideally, one consultant interviewer would be paired with one MnDOT interviewer in these instances. Interview participation must be in person and will require some travel to the district.

Deliverables: Participation in up to five interviews

Task 7: Collect & organize interview information

Work with the interviewers to collect data from each interview. Provide feedback and follow up as needed to improve data quality. Input data into one database that is easily searched and sorted. Set up a coding structure and code interview data as it is inputted. Data coding should allow for different levels of analysis, such as understanding impacts of overlapping vulnerabilities. Recode data as needed due to project changes.

Deliverables: Database of all interview data that is easily searched and sorted

Task 8: Summarize findings & develop recommendations

Create a summary report which includes an overview of the project as well as key themes. Work with the MnDOT project team, MnDOT advisory groups, and other relevant stakeholders to develop recommendations based on findings. Identify specific, actionable next steps for MnDOT and partners to take in order to advance equity. Develop a draft report and update as needed based on feedback from the MnDOT project team. The report should include supporting materials such as an executive summary, key talking points and a PowerPoint presentation summarizing key findings. All final documents must meet MnDOT formatting and accessibility requirements. Since this is a pilot project, the report should also include thorough process documentation and identification of what worked well and what could be improved.

Deliverables: Draft summary report; final summary report; executive summary; key talking points; PowerPoint presentation

Task 9: Communications support

Provide communications support to MnDOT staff throughout the project. This includes assistance at the beginning of the project to refine key talking points, developing a project one pager and other materials related to project messaging. This also includes developing handouts and talking points related to the project results, such as overall highlights and personal story summaries, in addition to the final report.

Deliverables: Refined key talking points; project one pager and other related materials; results highlights; personal story summaries

MnDOT roles & responsibilities

This project will be completed by a combination of MnDOT Central Office, MnDOT District and consultant support. The key roles and responsibilities for MnDOT are identified in the following sections.

MnDOT Central Office Staff

- Overall project management
- Management of the consultant contract
- Participate in interviews

MnDOT District Staff

- Help identify interviewees
- Participate in interviews
- Determine district preference and process for maintaining relationships with interviewees moving forward

Other considerations

- This is a project about advancing equity. Diversity of the project team and DBE/TBG participation is important.
- Questions for MnDOT to answer as part of this pilot phase:
 - Are we receiving feedback through these conversations that can help us make meaningful change? If not, what adjustments could we make to improve the strategy?
 - Are the right stakeholders and partners involved? Did we identify anyone that was missing that should be included in future district efforts? Should anyone's role or responsibility be different in future efforts?
 - What overall timeframe is needed to complete this effort in every district? What is the desired timeframe?
 - What resources, staff and consultant budget, are needed to complete this effort in every district?