

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT: RAPIDRIDE J LINE

The Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative seeks to eliminate racial inequity in our community. Part of this work includes the use of a Racial Equity Toolkit (RET). The RET helps to ensure racial equity within major construction projects, such as the RapidRide J Line. It does this by guiding the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, initiatives, programs, and budgets.

There are six steps in the RET process:

- Setting outcomes
- Involving stakeholders and analyzing data
- Determining benefits and/or burdens
- Advancing opportunities or minimizing harm
- Evaluating, raising racial awareness, and being accountable
- Reporting back. (For this RET we are also including the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic.)

The RET is developed as the project begins and remains a living document throughout the entire life of that project. Because the RET is a living document there may be unanswered questions or information that has yet to be collected in this document.

The RET is a guide and not a checklist of tasks. The one attached will help the RapidRide J Line team to eliminate racial inequity by providing considerations and questions to ask during each phase of the project.

PROGRAM: RapidRide Roosevelt J Line

DESCRIPTION: Provide high-quality transit service along one of the corridors with the City's highest potential ridership, serving Downtown, South Lake Union, Eastlake, University District, and Roosevelt.

DEPARTMENT: SDOT

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STEP 1: GOALS & DESIRED OUTCOMES

1a. What does your department define as the most important racially equitable community outcomes related to the issue?

To provide reliable, high-capacity, high-frequency transit service connecting a fast-growing and diverse range of neighborhoods from Downtown north to Roosevelt.

- Provide a direct and reliable connection from Downtown to North Seattle while also creating a more complete Seattle transit network for all.
- Provide affordable and steady access to employment opportunities, educational services, and healthcare and social services located throughout the corridor.
- Increase mobility for students, residents, employees, and shoppers.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improve access to neighborhood centers and small businesses along the corridor.
- Support mixed-use developments encouraged by a robust multi-modal transportation network.
- Cultivate long-lasting relationships that can aid in future projects and hold the department and city accountable on project outcomes in the future.

1B: MAIN IMPACTED RACIAL EQUITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Which racial equity opportunity area(s) will the issue primarily impact: Education, Community Development, Health, Environment, Criminal Justice, Jobs, and/or Housing?

- Environment
- Housing
- Jobs
- Community Development
- Health
- Education

1C: SPECIAL IMPACTS

Are there impacts on: Contracting Equity, Workforce Equity, Immigrant and Refugee Access to Services, and/or Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement?

- **CONTRACTING EQUITY:** Consultants will be used for design and outreach. The design and outreach contracts were advertised through separate procurements allowing maximum opportunities for including small and minority owned business participation. The design consultant contract includes provisions for encouraging Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) subconsultants and includes requirements for reporting utilization with their monthly invoicing. Federal funding is planned for this project which will require following DBE requirements for construction contracting.
 - **WORKFORCE EQUITY:** The line will connect a variety of employment hubs offering an array of different types of jobs, in addition to connecting demographically diverse neighborhoods.
 - **IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ACCESS TO SERVICES:** The line would increase opportunities for access to inclusive places of employment as well as healthcare and educational services.
 - **INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:** This project provides a unique opportunity to engage with smaller neighborhood centers and local/small/minority-owned businesses that may normally be overshadowed by the larger employers and institutions along the corridor.
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STEP 2: STAKEHOLDER DATA & COLLABORATION

2A: AFFECTED GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

Are there impacts on geographic areas?

- Downtown
- Lake Union
- North
- Northeast

2B: RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

What are the racial demographics of those living in the area or impacted by the issue?

The corridor connects the neighborhoods of Downtown Seattle, Belltown, South Lake Union, Eastlake, University District, and Roosevelt. The neighborhoods are all urban in nature, with a mixture of residential, retail, and office uses. The highest densities are found in Downtown Seattle. The lowest densities are in Roosevelt because of the adjacent single-family residential

neighborhood.

The study area for socioeconomic is 0.25 mile around the corridor, where most of the impacts and benefits would occur. Community facilities in the study area include religious institutions, libraries, schools, and social service organizations. The Seattle Police and Fire Departments respond to calls and there are hospitals within the study area. Government offices are located mainly in Downtown Seattle. As noted in the Environmental Assessment of January 2020, Purpose and Need, population, and employment are forecasted to increase by 29% and 50%, respectively, by 2035.

Based on U.S. Census data, there are 50,544 residents within the study area, 5% under age 18 and 12% 65 and over (U.S. Census, 2018). The population 65 and over is similar to Seattle as a whole (11.9%), but the population under 18 is much lower (4.8%) when compared to Seattle (15.3%). This might be a result of the proximity to the UW and the number of college students living in the University District and not families with children. The percentage of households with no vehicle (transit-dependent) in the study area is much higher than Seattle (38.2% compared to 16.8%).

Most of the businesses adjacent to the corridor in neighborhoods outside of Downtown Seattle tend to provide goods and services to those living and working in the immediate area and include restaurants, coffee shops, and services such as cleaners and dentists. Major employers in the study area include Amazon, the City of Seattle, King County, the UW, and the regional medical centers. Additionally, Westlake Center in Downtown Seattle is a major employment hub. The unemployment rate in Seattle was 3.8% in December 2018 (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2019).

Demographic data on minority and low-income populations was collected using American Community Survey 5-year (2013-2018) estimate data (U.S. Census, 2018). Minority populations in the study area (40.2%) are higher than Seattle (34.7%), with higher concentrations in the University District (54.3%) and Belltown (43.8%) neighborhoods. The low-income population in the study area (23.9%) is almost double that of Seattle (12.5%), with higher concentrations found in the University District (50.3%) and Downtown Seattle (23.6%) neighborhoods. Because of the higher minority and low-income populations in the University District and the potential for students to be living in the study area attending school and not working or working part-time, demographic data from the University of Washington (UW) were collected and reviewed. Based on the most current data for undergraduate students (UW, 2018), the minority population attendance was over 60% (including students who reside outside of the study area). Approximately 27% of undergraduate students are eligible to receive grants and would be considered low-income (UW, 2018). UW housing developments within the study area indicate a higher presence of students. There are several social service organizations in the study area, such as shelters and food banks, with most located in Downtown Seattle.

Additional demographic information of note:

A number of social service organizations are located in the study area that could serve minority and low-income populations, including the University District Urban Rest Stop and University

District Food Bank in the University District neighborhood, Immanuel Community Services in South Lake Union, and Downtown Emergency Service Center shelters located in South Lake Union and Downtown Seattle. The social service organizations include 24 affordable housing complexes in the study area, with the majority located in the southern portion of the study area.

Households with no vehicle can be considered transit-dependent, which can be an indicator of low-income populations. However, it can also be associated with households and students attending the UW that have decided not to use a personal vehicle and instead use transit, bicycle, walk, or ride share programs. In the study area, almost 38% of households do not own an automobile which is over double that of Seattle. All of the neighborhoods in the study area, except Eastlake, have higher percentages of transit-dependent populations than Seattle as a whole, with the highest percentages in the University District (47.1%) and Downtown Seattle (52.4%) areas. In the Eastlake neighborhood, 9.5% of the population is considered transit dependent.

Limited English proficiency (LEP) can be an indicator of minority populations and can provide additional information on potential language barriers in the study area that helps make targeted outreach to minority populations more effective. Within the study area, the LEP population is similar to Seattle (8.1%), but within the University District and Downtown Seattle, the LEP population is 13.5% and 9.2% respectively.

2C: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

How have you involved community members and stakeholders?

Public outreach for the Project has included targeted stakeholder interviews and open houses. The City of Seattle also maintains a Project website that provides information, links to allow people to sign up for updates, and contact information. Outreach activities for the Project that began in November 2014 distributed a fact sheet to community members and businesses along the proposed Project corridor. SDOT has attended district council meetings and conducted stakeholder meetings.

Specific outreach events to date have included:

- *Open Houses:* SDOT has held three open houses for the Project to date (May 2015, December 2015, and June 2016). In addition, an online open house was held from January 7 to February 7, 2016 to collect input from those unable to attend the December open house. The purpose of these open houses was to provide information on the Project and provide opportunities to ask questions and provide comments. Information for these open houses was posted on the Project website and notices were distributed to several organizations, agencies, and the public. Open houses were held on consecutive days at locations spread through the corridor to minimize travel distances for those who wanted to attend. The notifications for the open houses included direct mailers, the Project website, community calendars, and social media. Based on demographics in the Project corridor, information for the meetings included text in Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic languages on how to request translated information and/or translators at meetings. No alternative language materials or

translators have been requested. Each of the public open houses was held near the Project corridor at ADA-accessible facilities and near transit. The public was invited to provide feedback using comment cards, website links to electronically provide input, or through one-on-one conversations during the meetings. A total of 303 people signed into the open houses. Key comments heard during the open houses included improving safety along the corridor, improving transit frequency and reliability, and trade-offs between maintaining and removing on-street parking.

- *Neighborhood Associations/Community Councils:* SDOT provided information on the Project and answered questions from associations and councils in the study area including the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association, University Business Improvement Association, Eastlake Community Council, South Lake Union Community Council, and Downtown Seattle Association.

- *Business Access Survey:* SDOT staff walked Eastlake Ave E to distribute parking and loading surveys to businesses and meet with adjacent business operators. The survey focused on Eastlake businesses because of concerns heard regarding parking loss along the corridor from businesses and the Eastlake Community Council.

- *Scoping Meeting:* SDOT held a public scoping meeting for the RapidRide Roosevelt Project in December 2017 in the Eastlake neighborhood. Approximately 43,000 mailers were sent to residents and businesses within 0.25 mile of the Project corridor. The mailers provided information on the time and location, background on the Project, and how to provide comments and be involved in the Project. The mailer included information in Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic on how to receive translated meeting materials (no requests were received). The public scoping meeting provided the opportunity for the public to review and comment on the Project purpose and need, the alternatives, and the range of issues to be addressed in the Draft Environmental Assessment. A total of 37 people signed into the scoping meeting. The main comments received during the scoping process were regarding loss of parking (including one comment from a minority business owner), the need for protected bicycle lanes, the range of alternatives and design elements, and support or opposition for the Project.

- *Eastlake Project Briefing:* SDOT held a Project briefing meeting with the Eastlake neighborhood in October 2018 to share information on the proposed bicycle facility for the neighborhood and share strategies to address the loss of on-street parking. SDOT sent a mailer to residents and businesses in the Eastlake neighborhood and included information in Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic on how to receive translated materials (no requests were received). The meeting was held in the neighborhood at the TOPS K-8 school.

- *Eastlake Neighborhood Parking Workshop:* SDOT held a parking workshop with the Eastlake neighborhood in January 2019 to provide information on potential parking and transportation demand management strategies. The goals of the meeting were to better understand the community concerns and to solicit feedback and other ideas from community members on how to address parking. Information on the meeting was sent to businesses and community members who requested to be part of the workshop. The

meeting was held at the Center for Wooden Boats in South Lake Union. No requests were received on the need to translate materials or have a translator at the meeting.

- *Native American Tribes:* FTA has government-to-government responsibility for coordinating with federally recognized Native American tribes. There are no tribal lands located in the study area, but tribes are consulted about their interests related to natural and cultural resources. FTA initiated consultation with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Snoqualmie Tribe, Stillaguamish Tribe, the Tulalip Tribes of Washington, Snoqualmie Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. FTA contacted the tribes by letter and tribes were invited to the agency scoping meeting. As part of scoping, the Muckleshoot Tribe commented on bridge crossings and fish issues as a result of electrical discharge. During the consultation with tribes required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Stillaguamish Tribe commented on the need to provide archaeological monitoring during construction.

- *Shortened RapidRide J Route:* In fall 2020, the project identified the need to shorten the route to help King County Metro address budget shortfalls brought on by economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while leveraging transit alternatives in the North Link restructure. An online presentation took place in December 2020 to provide an update to the impacted communities. The online forum format provided an equal opportunity for all participants to ask questions through chat without some of the limitations we have seen at in-person events (We have had participants of color voice concerns with speaking up in large crowds where a white majority offer different opinions.).

2D: EXISTING RACIAL INEQUITIES & CAUSES

What does data and your conversations with stakeholders tell you about existing racial inequities that influence people's lives and should be taken into consideration?

Early conversations yielded no discussions of racial inequities as related to the project. The higher than average POC populations in the project area aren't necessarily tied to low-income or disadvantaged populations, but are largely because of tech workers and students, and then reasonably priced new development further north. These areas are racially diverse because of the nature of the employment and educational opportunities available there.

2E: HISTORICAL INEQUALITIES

Eastlake has the lowest percentage of minority and low-income populations within the study area, likely due to its history as a single-family neighborhood and space for vehicle storage. Density is increasing with more multiple-family units, townhomes, and up-zoned buildings in development, and the need for transit has grown as parking requirements for new developments become less strict.

STEP 3: BENEFIT VS. BURDEN

3a. How will the policy, initiative, program, or budget issue increase or decrease racial equity?

The removal of on-street parking, installation of protected bike lanes, and bus stop optimization would increase racial equity by allowing more frequent and reliable transit for increasingly dense and diverse neighborhoods.

3b. What benefits to the impacted community/demographic may result?

The Project would result in several benefits, including improved transit speed and reliability, expanding connections to neighborhoods and transit, and bicycle safety. These benefits would apply to a greater degree to low-income populations and others who depend on transit. The transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements would help to maintain movement in the corridor neighborhoods, which are identified for high growth and expected to become more congested. Based upon the analysis conducted, the Project would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations.

3c. What are potential unintended consequences (both negative and positive potential impact)?

SDOT reviewed the assessments performed for the other environmental elements, including transportation and noise and vibration, to evaluate the impacts during operation and construction, and the proposed mitigation and measures to reduce or avoid impacts. The analysis determined whether the Project would result in impacts for each of the environmental elements, considering proposed mitigation measures. Impacts that would be effectively mitigated would not result in adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations and no further analysis was required. For those elements where impacts would remain after mitigation, the analysis determined whether the impacts would be adverse and if the impacts could result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations. Project benefits were also considered when determining disproportionately high and adverse impacts.

3d. Are the impacts aligned with your department's community outcomes that were defined in Step 1?

Yes.

Benefit: By providing RapidRide transit to this corridor, it increases mobility and reliable, low-cost access to three major employment centers as well as educational and social services for all residents and those who work in these neighborhoods.

Burden: There is a potential for some parking or ADA accessibility displacement that may occur due to the changing transit line and associated bike and pedestrian improvements that could disproportionately some small and minority-owned businesses. DOT is committed to conducting further outreach and collaboration to mitigate for these concerns, most of which arrive from the least diverse neighborhood along the route, Eastlake. In general, any impacts are expected to be offset or even improved based on the improved transit and bicycle network.

STEP 4: MINIMIZE RISK

4a. How will you re-align your work if the impacts of your work DO NOT align with desired community outcomes? Identify your re-alignment plans in the following three areas:

STRATEGIES:

- **PROGRAM:** Continue stakeholder outreach and modify methods and considerations to reflect the changing social and political landscape of the city.
 - **POLICY:** Promote discounted fares, invest in advertising highlights of the corridor, develop methods to ensure that any WMBE access that is negatively affected is mitigated.
 - **PARTNERSHIPS:** Partner with Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and Office of Economic Development (OED), seek POEL participation in future design, and utilize KCM outreach resources. KCM will assist with and attend all engagement activities and share, via all Metro channels, opportunities to engage on the project. Metro will lead on service-related questions and work with the community to address any critical gaps.
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STEP 5: DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH ACCOUNTABILITY IN MIND**INTERNAL EVALUATION & ACCOUNTABILITY**

5a: How will you evaluate and be accountable?

Traditional transit performance measures:

- Ridership
- Productivity
- Transit speed/reliability

RSJI specific strategies:

- Keep track of race data with regards to stakeholder participation vs. population, ensure and if necessary, pursue participation.
- Continue outreach efforts throughout different phases of the project and adjust for current social and political climates.
- Ensure that stakeholder participation and associated demographics are readily available to the public in a straightforward yet comprehensive document.

5B: UNRESOLVED ISSUES

How will you evaluate and report impacts on racial equity over time?

RESOURCES: Create pathways and budget line items for the necessary targeted outreach associated with this project, particularly for the study of new COVID-19 related impacts.

RELATIONSHIPS: Ensure thorough relationship building and tapping into existing City staff and Departments that identified community leaders are in fact representative and not simply the loudest and/or usual voices.

5c. What is your goal and timeline for eliminating racial inequity?

In recognition that the elimination of racial equity is a much larger goal than any single project, SDOT strives to use transit to further a mobility system that is equally accessible to all residents in every area of the City.

5d. How will you retain stakeholder participation and ensure internal and public accountability?

SDOT is committed to continuing to conduct meaningful public engagement, particularly as the path toward COVID recovery becomes clearer and the project scope is solidified.

5e. How will you raise awareness about racial inequity related to this issue?

Through public engagement and strategic communications, SDOT will take the opportunity to educate the public about the benefit of increased housing availability, transit and safe bicycle and pedestrian options on Seattle's diverse communities.

5f. What is unresolved?

SDOT will continue to strategically engage with affected communities and continue targeted outreach in situations or neighborhoods where affected residents may not feel comfortable in traditional open house settings.

STEP 6: *How has the pandemic affected the adjacent communities?* ADDRESSING IMPACTS OF COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

6a: AFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

Moving forward, SDOT should address the changes in ridership along the proposed route due to extended work from home orders, and the effects on low-wage essential workers that work along the J Line.

Capacity limits and a reduced operating schedule has had an impact on riders who rely on Metro services to get to/from essential needs. In the immediate term Metro has responded to COVID-level crowding with additional service on high ridership routes to mitigate pass ups.

6b: AFFECTS OF PROGRAM ON COVID-19 RECOVERY

The project should have positive impacts on future COVID recovery programs as it will facilitate high capacity mobility back into the Downtown core in furtherance of revitalizing businesses in urban areas. This would specifically benefit communities who rely more on transit and don't have access to vehicles, a significant portion of the resident population along the project corridor.

6c: ADDITIONAL OUTREACH REQUIRED DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

How will SDOT and our partners assess the workforce changes and new ridership needs due to the changing business landscape?

STEP 7: FEEDBACK & LESSONS LEARNED.

Create a pathway to allow for a comprehensive team and department wide approach to adapt outreach and engagement procedures, allowing for cohesive evolution of our RSJI efforts and resources.

7a: How have proposed changes to the project scope affected issues of race and equity?

In August 2020, it was proposed that the scope of the project be reduced from Downtown-Roosevelt to Downtown- UW, reducing the scope of the project by 20 blocks. While reducing the overall footprint serviced by the J line, the portion that was removed is the least densely populated along the corridor and represents one of the least diverse neighborhoods along the route (aside from Eastlake).

7b: Specific examples of lessons learned that might help inform other projects:

- Neighborhood meetings can sometimes draw crowds that aren't necessarily representative of the population, and others may feel excluded from certain spaces or crowds of familiar faces. SDOT should create a pathway for holding more targeted and inclusive events.