



1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 800 Portland, OR 97204 503.823.5185
Fax 503.823.7576 TTY 503.823.6868 www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation

Dan Saltzman Commissioner **Leah Treat** Director

PBOT Equity Matrix
Draft Executive Summary
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Executive Summary

Introduction

Recognizing the impacts of governmental institutional and structural racism and ableism in Portland, the City created the [Office of Equity and Human Rights in 2011](#) to help reduce and ultimately eliminate disparities experienced by communities of color and people with disabilities.

In 2014 and 2015 many City Bureaus, including PBOT, decided to hire an Equity and Inclusion Program Manager to help operationalize the work that would be necessary at the Bureau level to eliminate disparities experienced by Portland's most marginalized community members.

According to City of Portland Ordinance 184880, "The Office of Equity and Human Rights will lead with race and ethnicity as a starting focus and address disparities for people with disabilities, as initial priorities. The focus of new work will be internally oriented, designing systemic changes within the City of Portland government."

The same year that the Office of Equity and Human Rights was formed, 2011, PBOT created its first Equity Matrix, that was to be used within the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS). This equity matrix looked at the demographics of students in specific schools, and not use tract or block level census data relating to where Portlanders were living. The City of Portland's SRTS program worked with community partners to create policy around equitable service delivery. Through these efforts, SRTS staff and stakeholders acknowledged that these equity goals could only be achieved through coordinated and focused efforts by both governmental and community partners. Although not Bureau wide, the SRTS equity matrix paved the way for many additional equity matrices at PBOT, and ultimately helped lead the Bureau to creating a standardized equity matrix that could be used by anyone.

In 2014 Signals and Streetlights contracted with the Coalition for a Livable Future to design an equity matrix that they could use for Portland's LED Street Light conversion process. This was also a stand-alone equity matrix that had a tailored purpose, and was only used on one project. The equity matrix design used tract level because the data was sourced from the Coalition for a Livable Future's Regional Equity Atlas, and this was their methodology.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation first recognized the need to incorporate equity measures into our large infrastructure decision making processes in 2014 with the Transportation System Plan (TSP) update. The TSP equity matrix uses track level data because the data sources originated from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's (BPS) work with the Opportunity/Vulnerability index, which was a complex index measuring displacement risk designed using the most accurate census data available.

In 2015 PBOT applied a TriMet designed equity matrix to their Vision Zero program, which was an index that used 10 different data points and was called the "Communities of Concern" matrix.

On July 8th, 2015, Council adopted [Citywide Racial Equity Goals and Strategies](#), and shortly after that PBOT recognized the need to create a standardized equity matrix that could be used broadly in the Bureau and in the City, and aligned with these goals and strategies.

Standardized Equity Matrix

While PBOT was the originator of the standardized Equity Matrix at the City, we have been collaborating with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, the Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR), Parks and Recreation, the Portland Housing Bureau, and with all the equity staff at the City who now span eight Bureaus.

The Equity Matrix was not only developed jointly with City Bureaus, but also included input from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, Metro, PolicyLink and others, and is considered in beta format currently as we refine additional layers and usage.

The Bureau Director of OEHR was consulted twice in lengthy methodology meetings, and then select OEHR staff have been involved throughout. The OEHR Title II and Title VI Citywide Coordinator was consulted to ensure the Equity Matrix supported Civil Rights requirements.

Data

Every equity tool we now design supports the 2011 ordinance outlining that the City lead its equity initiatives with racial justice and disability justice principles. Using race and income as the key variables in an Equity Matrix is the most intersectional approach that continues to

center the needs of communities of color and people with disabilities. People with disabilities are over-represented in low income communities locally and nationally.

According to the [Poverty in Multnomah County Report](#):

“Persons with disabilities are overrepresented within the county’s population in poverty: 12% of the county’s population has a disability, while 19% of the county’s population in poverty has a disability.”

And;

“National data indicate that persons with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as the general population. Those who do have jobs tend to earn about two-thirds as much as the general population. These disparities are even more pronounced for persons of color with disabilities. For example, whereas the unemployment rate for all persons with disabilities nationally is 13.4%, the rate for African-Americans with disabilities is 20.8%.”

According to the [2011 Office of Equity and Human Rights Ordinance](#):

“Portland has become more diverse. Communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities are growing. Today, approximately 1 in 2 students in Portland's public schools are students of color.”

And;

“Data presented by the Urban League of Portland's State of Black Oregon (2009), and the Coalition of Communities of Color's Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile (2010), shows that racial and ethnic disparities are pervasive and worsening over time. In poverty, employment and education measures, Portland's communities of color have outcomes between 15% and 20% worse than white communities.”

And;

“Data presented by the Portland Commission on Disability demonstrates that significant disparities for persons with disabilities, including 80% of persons with intellectual or mental disability have been sexually assaulted; persons with disabilities are twice as likely to be earning \$15,000 or less annually. The national average unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is 18%, though many sources report it may be as high as 70% for persons living outside of institutions. (Oregon Office of Investigations and Training annual Reports (2003,2010); the Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force findings (2009); Final Report" Best Practices for

the Employment of People with Disabilities in State Government”, Equal Employment Commission (2005); and the National Adult Protective Services Association’s National Inventor (2008 -2010).”

And;

“Data presented by the Coalition for a Livable Future’s Regional Equity Atlas (2007) highlights demographic disparities across the Metro region, and shifts location of poverty and residences of communities of color between 1990 and 2000.”

According to the [Disparities in Access and Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities in Portland White Paper](#):

“Gathering data on persons with disabilities has some unique challenges. First, while various agencies collect data across different sectors, there is no common definition of disability. Second, we cannot track trends because the American Community Survey (ACS), which collects disability data for the US Census, has revised its disability questions several times over the past decade. The ACS website acknowledges, “the new ACS disability questions should not be compared to the previous ACS disability questions or the Census 2000 disability data.”ⁱⁱ Third, the 2010 Census did not collect data on disability, and the sample sizes for ACS data are too small to enable us to effectively map the disability data at a census tract or neighborhood level.ⁱⁱⁱ Fourth, it is very difficult to gather employment data since employers are not legally allowed to ask about disability status during the recruitment and hiring process. While this prohibition helps prevent employment discrimination, it makes data collection more difficult.”

The City of Portland is charged with effectively meeting the needs of and providing service to the community. As public policy has played a pivotal role in creating inequitable outcomes for communities of color and persons with disabilities, it is critical that government enact policies and create tools to dismantle the resulting systemic disparities. The Equity Matrix uses the most accurate data points from the Census that align with achieving our desired equity outcomes for communities of color and people with disabilities, and we have designed the matrix to apply this lens specifically, understanding how intersectionality impacts disparate outcomes.

The Equity Matrix scores only include statistically relevant information about where people live, so we would not add additional scoring measures that didn’t align with this methodology, however we are adding many more layers that can help inform decision making. PolicyLink indicates that equity matrices should only use data that can be updated annually, and the ACS data for income and race/ethnicity is statistically valid at the tract level, and has an annual update. While the TriMet ramp deployment data is incomplete and does not tell a complete story about people with disabilities, we are currently analyzing the data to determine if it

should be added to the matrix as an additional unscored informational layer, much like the current Vision Zero data layer and the affordable housing data layers we have already added to the matrix.

We are using tract level data and not block level data for many reasons, all centered around data validity, accuracy and annual availability. As we are all working together as a City to eliminate disparities broadly, it is also important to note that the Policy Link National Equity Atlas uses tract level data for their maps, the Portland's Regional Equity Atlas uses tract level data, the PBOT TSP (Transportation System Plan) uses tract level data, and the BPS Opportunity Vulnerability index uses tract level data (and we are adding these as layers to the Equity Matrix).

The Census data at the tract level can be updated annually and we are only using data with low margins of error and tracts are designed for tracking demographic and economic change over time. Data in block groups have suffered tremendously. American Community Survey (ACS) data, the Census Bureau's continuous replacement survey for the decennial long-form survey, is published for block groups along with the attendant margins of error. Analysts need to keep a close eye on levels of error when poking around ACS block group data. In contrast, ACS census tract data generally have smaller margins of error and can be used with more confidence.

Our transportation planning at PBOT also takes into considering that we are planning for complete networks that can safely get Portlander's around. Routes are not at the Block level, they are at the track level, and focusing on the block level ignores the reality of travel needs, transportation needs, and we will be able to see a lot more when we take a bigger picture look and understand the full context of where people are traveling to and from. Personal safety and willingness to travel in the right of way involves route planning that is more than just the block level. While current PBOT policy does not preclude anyone from looking at block level data, we feel confident that for all the reasons stated above that the tract level will be the standard approach ongoing for large scale decision making and the Equity Matrix.