City of Takoma Park
Housing and Community Development Department:

Racial Equity Project Profile- Bus Stop Improvements.

Date: February 26, 2021
Staff Contact: Jamee Ernst
City Website Link: https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/housing-and-community-development/planning-and-community-development/bus-stop-improvements/

Project Goal

- Prioritize the installation of bus shelters at stops based on ridership, racial equity, climate impact, cost, and safety criteria and funding availability.

Project Description

- The City of Takoma Park initiated a comprehensive effort to update, inventory, and improve all bus stops in the City in order to encourage bus ridership and use of public transportation.

City Council Priorities

- A Livable Community for All

Racial Equity Considerations Submitted to City Council

- Demographic surveys conducted by Metrobus indicate that bus riders in the region are disproportionately people of color, particularly in comparison to Metrorail riders. Improving access to and amenities at bus stops could improve the transportation experience for all users of the City's public transportation network.

Racial Equity Toolkit Questions

What does data tell us about who is likely be impacted by the project? What data sources are you using and are there any data gaps?

A: The Planning Division used American Community Survey census block tracts data and WMATA RideOn ridership data to create proxy measures for ridership by race and ethnicity and provide context for highest ridership areas.

 It would be nice to have demographic information by individual bus line, but WMATA does not track that information. It would also be great to know ridership data by individual line and complete trip data with boarding and disembarkments, as well as the dates the bus shelters were installed.

 Previously, there was no representation of the quality of bus shelters or data visualization of ridership; this project filled in that data gap.

What is your community engagement strategy for this project? How will you use community feedback to avoid unintended consequences?

A: Before this project, bus shelter improvements were largely complaint-based – rather than deciding where to invest proactively based on data, improvements were made where the interested parties were most vocal. Complaint-based, reactive systems don't necessarily reflect the whole community, particularly when communities of color are not always able to articulate their needs or community engagement is an undue burden due to work and family commitments.

This data-driven project helps Council decide where to invest; it replaces complaint-based community feedback with community feedback derived from data patterns. This makes bus improvements more systematic and based on areas of high ridership rather than public outcry.

How are you evaluating the success of this project?

A: The success of this bus shelter inventory was measured by the goal of having all of the relevant data in one place and publicly available, for any resident to access. The mapped data shows where improvements will be made and why they are necessary so that City Council can make informed decisions.

 Another measure of success is how many bus shelters are installed, but that depends on funding availability. One bus shelter has already been installed at Ethan Allen and New Hampshire Avenues, Thanks to this project, Council has focus ADA funding around high ridership bus stops so that shelters can be installed (the stop needs to be

ADA accessible before new bus shelters can be installed. This budget allocation shows Council follow-through on the January resolution on bus shelter improvements that was informed by this project. Moving Council priorities forward was another measure of success for this project.

How might a successful project advance racial equity in Takoma Park, in a sustainable way?

A: This project helped define Council's criteria for where to install bus shelters: ridership, racial equity, climate impact, cost, and safety. Those criteria are incorporated into a Council resolution that sets policy on bus shelter improvements for the foreseeable future. It has helped shift the policy conversation away from small, vocal groups to an comprehensive look at where the most need is City-wide. You may have one vocal household asking their Councilperson for a bus shelter in one area, but 89 people standing out in the rain in another area who have not reached out to City government. The set of criteria helps eliminate that problem in deciding where to invest and how to prioritize when

Report Back!

Project Outcome & Racial Equity Impact

TBD, this project is still ongoing.

Next Steps:

What were the challenges of this project? What further action and resources are needed?

A: The Planning Division is working on ADA improvements in high priority locations. The bus shelter vendor (who installs them for free in exchange for advertising) will not install until the area is ADA accessible.