

Bringing Equity to the Forefront of Planning

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Credit: Survey Monkey

Equity is a concept that many may be familiar with; ensuring that funds, resources, time etc... are distributed to all that need them. However, to understand how to implement equity can be challenging, and even harder to examine and evaluate.

In the world of transportation as well as many other industries, there have been many attempts made to create criteria, systems, maps, or charts all with the same goal of understanding how to ensure that plans, programs, and funding are reaching the populations and groups that need it, in a word: equity. With these many different and separate systems, each attempt may address some of the needs for that plan, program, or project, but there has never been a holistic and standardized process that helps to unify all the fragments.

For the last three years, the Broward MPO has been working on a project to help address the need for a standardized method to examine and assess equity and ensure meaningful and thoughtful consideration and inclusion of underserved and underrepresented populations. This resource is the first of its kind and helps streamline what can be a confusing process. We have worked hard to create a resource that can help to make decisions easier through a data-driven process.

WHAT IS AN EQUITY ASSESSMENT?

Simply put, it is a process to identify areas of where populations protected by Federal non-discrimination authorities live, referred to as “equity areas.” At the Broward MPO, we are using these equity areas to help evaluate plans, programs, and projects and to make informed decisions regarding equity in our communities. The goal of equity implementation is to create an approach that is fair, inclusive, and proactive during all phases of the planning process

WHAT DOES “EQUITY” MEAN?

In this context, equity seeks to ensure that the benefits and impacts of plans, programs, and projects undertaken by the Broward MPO, its partner agencies (and anyone for that matter) are understood and that populations protected under Federal nondiscrimination laws and other authorities, including Title VI and Environmental Justice, are not disproportionately burdened during the planning process.

WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE?

The equity assessment process provides a ready to- use methodology and dataset to identify equity areas in your community. Knowing where populations protected under Federal nondiscrimination laws live is critical to ensuring that equity is appropriately considered during the planning process. However, as noted, these equity areas should serve as one resource to make informed decision-making and must be coupled with specific knowledge about your community's unique concerns and priorities

How can equity areas be used?

Our goal is that this information can and will be used as a planning resource not only by Broward MPO staff but also its partner agencies, including Cities, Counties, transit agencies, community organizations and many others. This data-driven methodology is intended to save time and be a valuable resource by providing easily accessible data and maps. Primarily, we hope that the methodology and outputs help facilitate the consideration of equity in the planning process, either by providing a standardized way to identify equity areas or by providing easily accessible key data for federally protected population groups in Broward County.

If you are interested in learning more about the Transportation Planning Equity Assessment or would like to use this resource in your area, please contact Erica Lychak, Title VI, and DBE Coordinator at Lychake@browardmpo.org