

**LINK
HOUSTON**



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#TransitEquityHTX**

MEASURING EQUITY IN PLANNING

*2019 FALL PLANNING WORKSHOP
HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL*

Jonathan Brooks
Director of Policy and Planning



**LINK Houston advocates
for a robust and equitable
transportation network so that
all people can reach opportunity.**

Learning Objectives

- What is equity?
- How might equity change based on scale or topic?
- How is equity predicated on correcting historic issues and trends?
- How is measuring equity in planning both measuring process quality AND subsequent changes to policy & programming?
- What is the role of community and advocates?

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Aimee and I will have failed today...*If you don't leave this room more knowledgeable and empowered to pursue a more equitable future for the Houston region.*

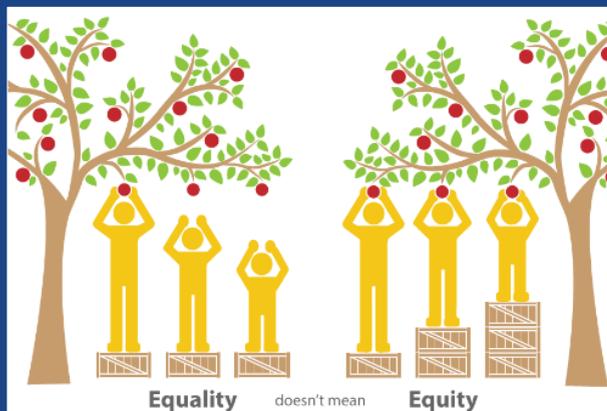
To that end, I will add to the previous speakers comments by briefly discussing...

- **What is equity? [personal, community]**
- **How might equity change based on scale or topic?**
- **How is equity predicated on correcting historic issues and trends?**
- **How is measuring equity in planning both measuring process quality AND subsequent changes to policy & programming?**
- **What is the role of community and advocates?**

Aimee will follow with a deeper dive into how public health professionals pursue equity

We look forward to discussing and answering questions

What is equity?



Personal Equity

Built Environment Quality / Barriers

A community's infrastructure quality matters.



Distance to Needs / Opportunity



A community's proximity to quality opportunities matters.

Community Equity

Source: www.communityview.ca/infographic_SHR_health_equity.html

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Personal equity vs community equity

Personal equity is ensuring fair access to opportunities, which differs from ensuring the same access. Equity is not the same as equality, which is giving everyone the same thing; equality only results in equal outcomes if everyone starts in similar conditions and without systemic barriers or institutional disparities to overcome.

Community equity in affordable transportation means ensuring equal distribution of system benefits and burdens. Every community should have acceptable sidewalks, crosswalks, bikeways, and public transit (i.e., local bus, light rail, regional express park-and-ride, bus, paratransit, vanpool, or general public demand response bus), which may require investing more in certain communities to bring those investments up to par with other communities and to address transportation and distance barriers to ensuring equal opportunity to accessing health care, education, and jobs, which may not exist or may be underrepresented in communities of color.

Equity is an outcome, difficult to measure...but there are ways

How might equity change based on scale or topic?

- **A plan's scale influences how equity is addressed**
 - Regional, county, city, community, family (socio-demographic groups)
 - The larger the geography the greater the risk of continuing harm, decreasing equity, in certain communities with historically disproportionate impacts – especially because equity focuses on correcting existing inequities.
- **A plan's subject matter matters too**
 - Transportation, health, education, resilience, housing, land use, etc.
- **Equity is not an end of itself; it is an effectual lens**

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Pursuing equity is ambitious and nuanced

A plan's scale influences how equity is addressed

Regional, county, city, community, family (socio-demographic groups)

The larger the geography the greater the risk of continuing harm, decreasing equity, in certain communities with historically disproportionate impacts – especially because equity focuses on correcting existing inequities.

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Transportation, health, education, resilience, housing, land use, etc.

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How is equity predicated on correcting historic issues and trends?

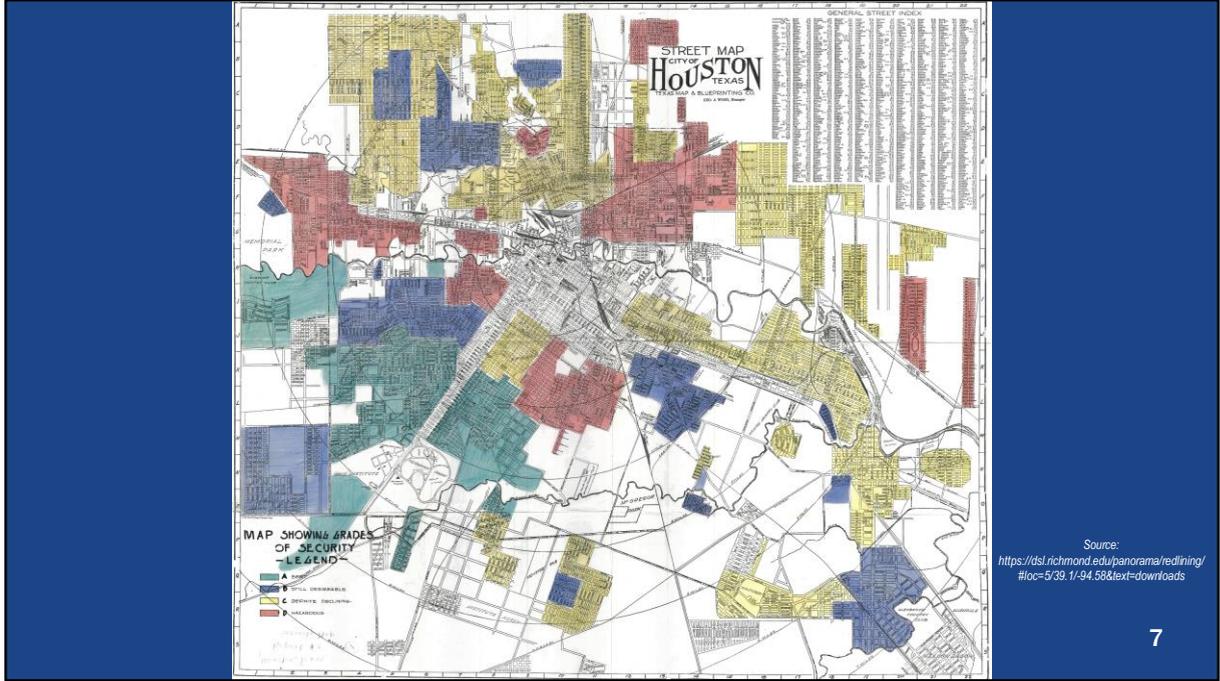


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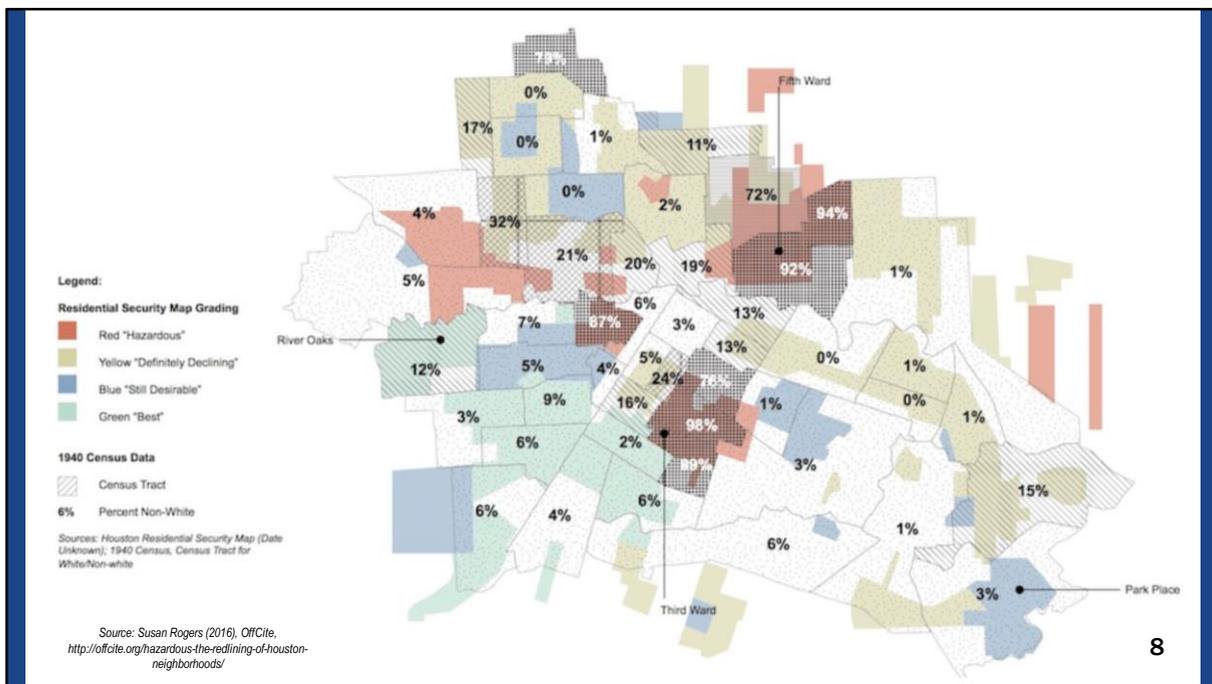
Redlining (real; the findings on the map are representative of previous and continuing racism, particularly in housing and the built environment, which has had lasting impacts on built environment that linger today.)

Source: "Mapping Inequality",

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/29.746/-95.371&city=houston-tx>



Entrenched disinvestment > lower density > lower investment/quality infrastructure > isolation and lower competitiveness > land use & transportation modeling > less investment following decades old supported trends



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Susan Rogers, UH Architecture Professor in 2016 article in OffCite <http://offcite.org/hazardous-the-redlining-of-houston-neighborhoods/>

The true power of these maps is not in how they were used — as other practices and maps that date both before and after the founding of the HOLC had far greater impact on institutionalizing discriminatory practices — but rather how they tell the story of these practices. These maps are a visual record that projected a future of disinvestment and racism.

Such a historical record allows us to trace back the discriminatory practices that created the inequality we see in Houston today. Any observant person walking or driving across this city can still see patterns of segregation and disinvestment made so clear in the 1930s; however, the stark lines of the map are blurring with new construction transforming urban neighborhoods to accommodate those with the resources and desire to live close-in. The resulting demographic inversion leads to new questions.

- Are we creating tools now that will lead to the same devastating disinvestment on the periphery where many, if not most, low-income people live?
- Can we create affordable housing options in neighborhoods like the Third Ward for those communities that persevered through an era of discrimination and disinvestment?
- And can we also provide affordable options for people who would choose to live in the

neighborhoods that did benefit from decades of government-backed investment?

e. No spirituous, vinous, or malt liquors or medicated bitters capable of producing intoxication, shall ever be sold or offered for sale on said premises or any part thereof, nor shall said premises or any part thereof ever be used for any business purpose of any character whatever.

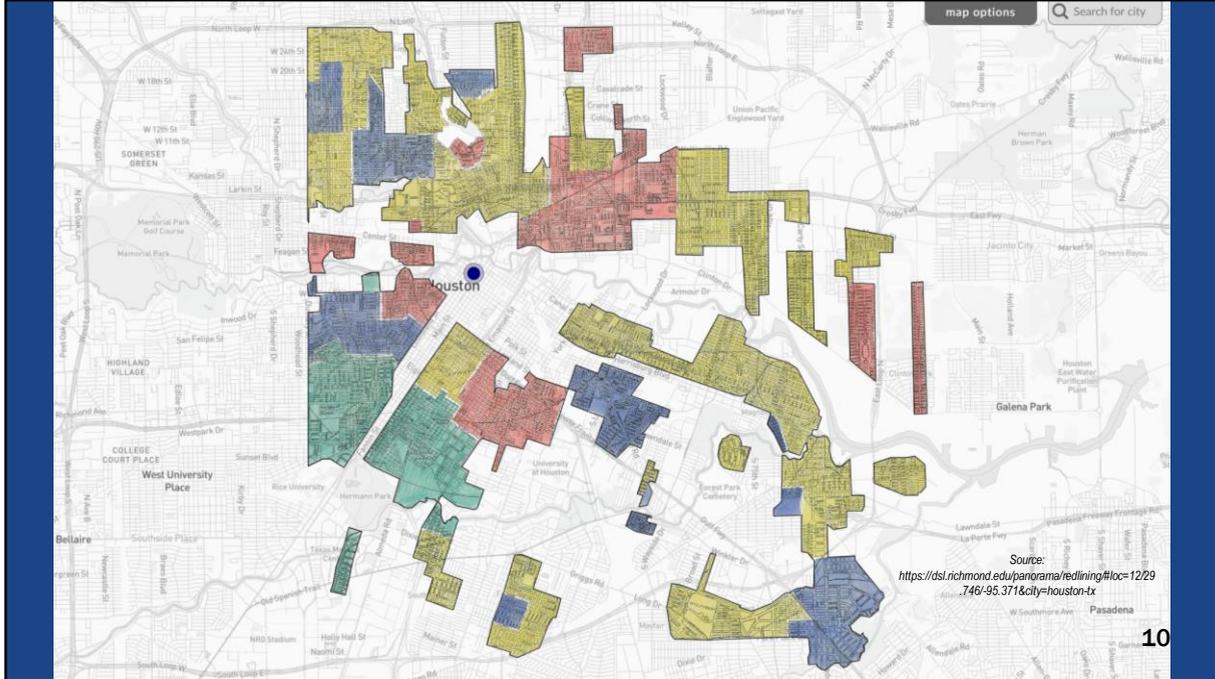
f. ~~The premises herein described shall never be sold, conveyed, or demised to any person except of the Caucasian race.~~²

g. For the purpose of protecting the streets and benefiting the civic appearance of the addition, the grantor reserves the right at all times to enter along the rear property lines of the lots of this addition within a distance of three (3) feet of such line, for the purpose of installing and repairing gas, sewerage, telephone and electric light services.

Source: Susan Rogers (2016), OffCite, <http://offcite.org/hazardous-the-redlining-of-houston-neighborhoods/> citing deed restrictions for Mandell Place in Montrose, Houston.

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Deed restrictions for Mandell Place in Montrose, Houston.



[Example for brief discussion]

RTP 2045 & Transportation Improvement Program (Call-for-Projects)

Equity a goal, but TIP EJ criteria disproportionately small weight that is not granular between projects (H-GAC has a good study on this topic though)...must align goals with requirements, policies, incentives to CREATE more equitable outcomes

METRO New Bus Network & METRONext

Main point: Cycle of disinvestment/under-resourcing can be changed to virtuous, equitable cycle guided by agreed goals derived from genuine engagement with community implemented with strategically elevated policy and programmed resources.

How is measuring equity in planning both measuring process quality AND subsequent changes to policy & programming?

Measuring equity in planning is gauging:

- Equitable influence in the process
(community-focused; early, often, genuine, return/report)
- Clear recognition/identification of inequities to address
(community-identified priorities)
- Historically aware modeling & forecasting
- Stated equity goals include actionable objectives
(where measurement really comes into force)
- Implement measurable changes to policy and programming

Must DO something

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The first start in measuring equity is making the goal to correct/address racial inequities by measuring and acknowledging existing racial inequities in communities. The other measurements are working backwards to address those inequities (and inequalities).

Measuring equity in planning is gauging:

Equitable influence in the process

(community-focused; early, often, genuine, return/report)

Clear recognition/identification of inequities to address

(community-identified priorities; data-informed)

Historically aware modeling & forecasting

Stated equity goals include actionable objectives

(where measurement really comes into force)

Implement measurable changes to policy and programming

Must DO something

Must move beyond “do no more harm”. Which is too often the implied mantra of existing Title VI and Environmental Justice regulations.

“How will this plan proactively address historic issues and improve policy, practice, and programs for people and the community?”

If equity is one of five pillar goals/values...then at least 20% of resources and outcomes should be realized.

Address Silos

City of Houston

- Climate Action Plan
- Resilient Houston Plan
- Vision Zero Initiative
- Complete Communities

Harris County

- Flood Bond Implementation
- Ped/bike county-wide study

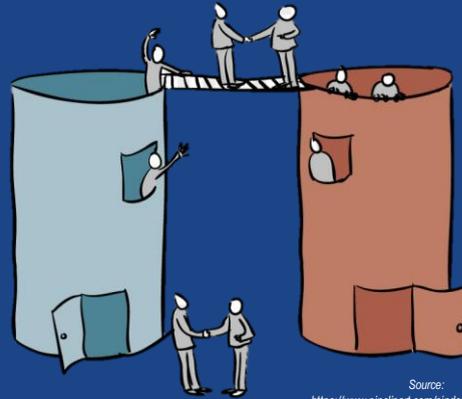
Houston-Galveston Area Council

- 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (and related plans/docs)

Texas Department of Transportation

- Statewide Long-range Plan
- North Houston Highway Improvement Project

To name only a few transportation-related plans



Source:
https://www.pinctopart.com/pindetail/obThdR_bust-silos-collaboration-silos-clipart/

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Breakdown silos; create concerted efforts clearly understood and accountable to the public.

There are many such plans:

What is the role of community?

- **Community priorities matter most in the pursuit of equity**
- **Meet community where they are, learn, educate (both directions), plan, implement community-desired improvements**
- **Detect deep, multi-faceted concerns > develop recommendations > give them voice**

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Community priorities matter most in the pursuit of equity

- Community priorities matter most in the pursuit of equity
- Meet community where they are, learn, educate (both directions), plan, implement community-desired improvements
- Detect deep, multi-faceted concerns > recommendations > give them voice

Example

City of Houston Complete Communities - a planning process centered in part on equity, holistic views, NEEDS resources and policy/incentives

Data-informed versus data-driven (?)

Data-informed allows for a more community-driven approach, bolstered/tempered by data and technical capacity of the planners, engineers, and policy folks formalizing the plan.

What is the role of advocacy?

- Advocates are not “the community”
- Advocates engage communities (geographic, special populations, etc)
 - Understand concerns, needs, opportunities, aspirations
 - Connect the public to decision-making (power/influence)
- Advocates hope to build dialogues based on trust to create long-term engagement and political will /cover for hard decisions

LINK Houston Research Partnership Guidelines rely on...

- Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>
- Principles for Community-Based Participatory Research, <https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/CBPR.pdf>

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Harnessing Advocacy to Improve Equity

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Example

Equity in Transit: 2018 Report

Advocates Develop Deep Community Ties; Then Leverage Data Measurement



Report Answered Vital Questions

Why is equity a concern? What is equity and how does transit relate?

Who rides transit in Houston? Where does Houston need more equitable transit?

How can transit be better and do more to improve equitable outcomes?

LINK Houston created the Transportation Equity Demand Index whilst seeking answers to three important questions:

- Where do people live in Houston that need access to opportunity via transit due to fundamental demographic or economic challenges?
- Where do people live in Houston that are more likely to ride transit due to other personal or family circumstances?
- Where in Houston is the environment (built and human) conducive to high-quality transit?

The Transportation Equity Demand Index combines 15 indicators to identify high-need areas in Houston where safe, affordable transportation is most needed to improve quality-of-life. There are three groups of indicators.

Where in Houston does frequent transit presently operate?

In which communities might transit effectively improve access to opportunity to help people and families to improve their own quality-of-life?

LINK Houston ON METRONext



The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) has a new long-term plan – METRONext – to improve or add about 500 miles of transit in the Houston region without any new tax. In the November 5, 2019 referendum, METRO is seeking to borrow up to \$3.5 billion, repayable by future METRO revenue.

LINK Houston's *Equity in Transit: 2018 Report* identified four high-demand areas where local transit is especially important for access to work, school, health care, etc. The report also calls for frequent, reliable, extended, and accessible transit service.

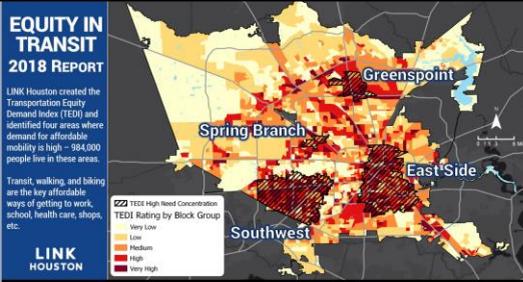
The table below summarizes how METRONext relates to our recommendations to improve local transit.

Summary of LINK Houston's recommendations for local transit (see <i>Equity in Transit: 2018 Report</i> for specific route recommendations by LINK Houston)	What this looks like in METRONext	What are the highlights of METRONext for the four high-demand areas identified by LINK Houston? (see maps on reverse side)
<p>More Frequent Services Frequency is key, due to shorter wait times, faster overall trips, and more convenient transfers</p> <p>More Reliable Services Buses and trains must be reliable, arriving on time, so trips take the expected time.</p> <p>Extended Service Hours Public transit service hours must be extended – especially to 24-hour activity centers where workers live and visitors are active, such as high-demand equity areas, airports, downtown, and the Texas Medical Center</p> <p>More Accessible Services METRO, along with local governments, must ensure walking and riding infrastructure safety connects riders of all abilities, ages, and size to/from transit to communities and destinations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased frequency on some 15-minute routes • Upgrades to some 30-minute bus routes to 15-minute routes • Upgrades to some 60-minute bus routes to 30-minute routes • Five METROrapid lines (~75 miles) • METRONail extensions, including to Hobby Airport (~17 miles) 	<p>Spring Branch Bus Operators Optimized System Treatments (BOOST) local bus service improvements to two bus routes.</p> <p>Greenspoint METROrapid service to/from Bush LNH Airport from an improved Greenspoint Transit Center.</p> <p>East Side METROrapid from Westchase extending east to Texas Southern University/University of Houston area and north to an improved Tidwell Transit Center. METRONail extensions; BOOST local bus service improvements to some routes on the south end of the high-demand area.</p> <p>Southwest METROrapid extension of the Uptown Line to a new Gulfton Transit Center; signature service on Westheimer; BOOST local bus improvements; community circulator service (characteristics to be determined).</p>

EQUITY IN TRANSIT 2018 REPORT

LINK Houston created the Transportation Equity Demand Index (TEDI) and identified four areas where demand for affordable mobility is high – 904,000 people live in these areas.

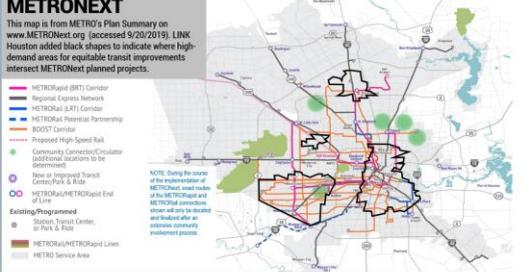
Transit, walking, and biking are the key affordable ways of getting to work, school, health care, shops, etc.



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METRONEXT

This map is from METRO's Plan Summary on www.METRONext.org (accessed 9/20/2019). LINK Houston added black shapes to indicate where high-demand areas for equitable transit improvements intersect METRONext planned projects.



LINK Houston's *Equity in Transit 2018 Report*: <https://linkhoustontx.org/reports-briefings/equity-in-transit-report/>
METRONext Plan: www.METRONext.org
Election Day is November 5, 2019

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Advocates for a robust and equitable transportation network so that all people can reach opportunity.

LINK Houston 708 Main Street | 10th Floor | Houston, TX 77002
(713) 353-4664 | info@linkhoustontx.org | www.LINKHouston.org

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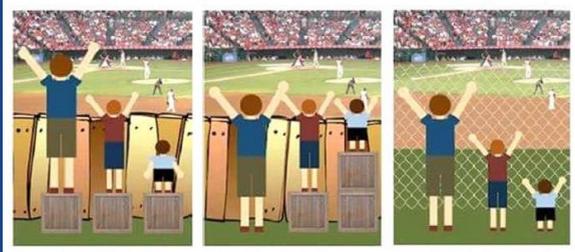
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Please refer to the infographic I distributed before we began to see how we, as advocates, use our community-based research to advance equity in a plan.

Equality is the goal.



Source: <https://www.directcourseonline.com/equity-equality-inclusion/equity-equality-graphic/>

Source: <https://www.ridemetro.org/SiteImage/DiscoverHouston.jpg>



Equity is the bus we must board to arrive there together.

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Equity is at the same time both a personal and community condition.

Again, measuring equity in planning is gauging influence during planning, clearly delineating inequities to address, historically aware modeling/forecasting, goals with actionable objectives for policy and programming.

NOT ENOUGH TO DISCUSS, ANALYZE, MUST DO SOMETHING.

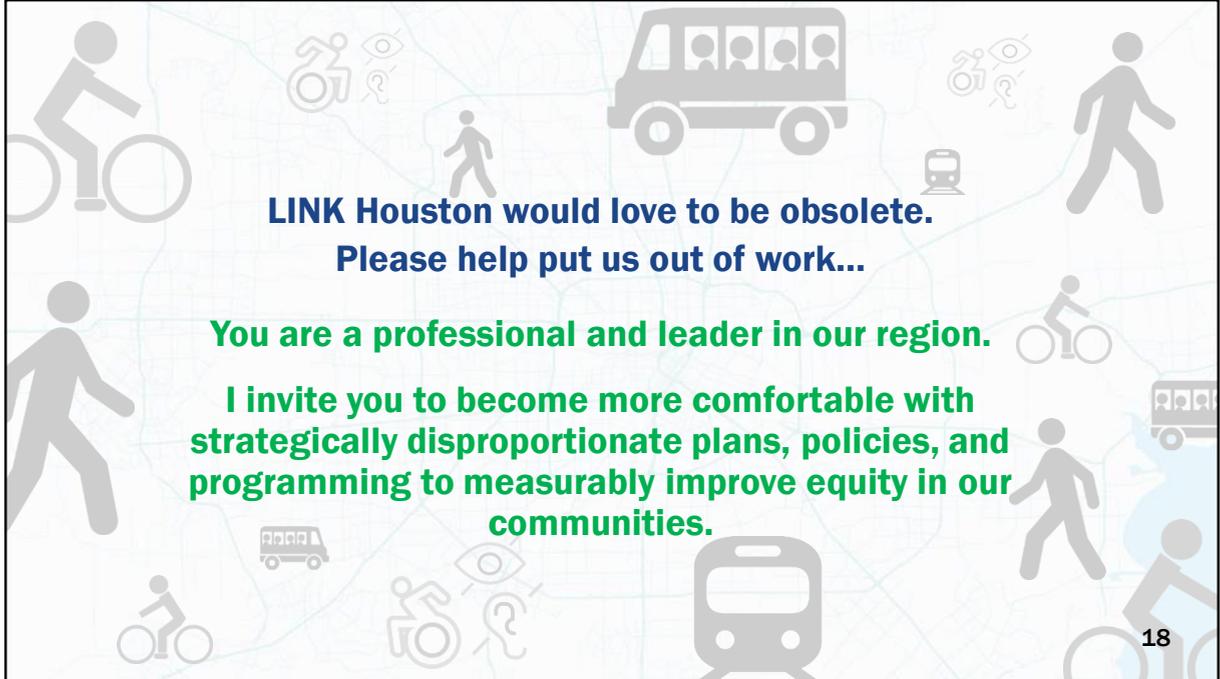
Requires strong leadership. Principled. Intentional misbalance of resources for long-term good. Hard sell, worthwhile.

- Courage to put teeth into policy/funding to realize gradual improvements
- Might require will to battle traditional power/influence structure
- Programming around purely who has power and makes a case for an immediate need is not likely to be furthering equitable goals
- We all too often in programming primarily address squeaky wheels, "we need this infrastructure cause a business is expanding. . okay, maybe, maybe not, they came to the nuisance, why must it fall to the public sector? Do our fees and requirements adequately cover costs and implications?" when the real squeaky wheel is the wheel bearing left ungreased for decades.

As a planner, I was trained to believe in process. A good process nets good results, maximum benefit, highest and best outcomes. **In practice I have learned processes vary in quality, and implementation is all too often short-lived** – requires an effective champion

Too many plans are created in silos, when cross-pollination is so critical to implementation – alternative conflict resolution versus zero-sum compromise.

Equity is not equal, it is strategic, bears long-term fruit for families and community
Equality is the goal, equity is the bus we all need to board to arrive there together.



LINK Houston would love to be obsolete.

Please help put us out of work...

As a professional and leader in our region, I invite you to become more comfortable with strategically disproportionate plans, policies, and programming to measurably improve equity in our communities.