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Planning Performance Indicators for Los Angeles: Access to Opportunity Data, Metrics, and Indicators



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Issue

As social equity becomes an increasingly important factor in decision-making and operations for public transit operators, LA Metro's Office of Extraordinary Innovation is seeking to identify indicators they can use to measure their constituents' access to opportunities and to better support transit equity in projects across their portfolio. This research builds on LA Metro's existing work (including its Traffic Reduction Study, 2028 Strategic Plan, and How Women Travel report, among others) to understand its existing data and what additional data is realistic to collect and incorporate moving forward.

This project seeks to identify indicators to measure how well LA Metro provides access to opportunity for riders and to understand the role of these indicators in the planning and decision-making process. Ultimately, the researchers ask: What opportunities exist for greater community and public stakeholder participation in LA Metro's planning processes to shape the development and implementation of public transit services in a way that will expand access to opportunity for LA Metro's Equity Focused Communities?

Study Approach

The research team conducted an extensive literature review of academic journals, city- and state-level transportation plans, and reports by public agencies to understand how

access to opportunity is currently measured and defined. The team also conducted interviews with several public stakeholders, including public agency and community-based organization representatives.

Key Research Findings

This research identified three strategies LA Metro can use to improve transit riders' access to opportunity:

- Specify goals for targeted riders.
- Expand the use of qualitative and disaggregated data.
- Explore innovative data-collection methods.

LA Metro currently focuses on network-level goals, such as reducing travel times but fails to address transit needs on a human scale. Establishing specific goals based on transit riders' needs and problems (e.g., such as reducing travel times for single mothers) can provide more efficient outcomes.

Second, given that current data is mainly quantitative, existing and future data should be disaggregated by demographics and incorporate qualitative data to better understand the needs of riders.

Lastly, current approaches to data collection can be improved through the implementation of more innovative

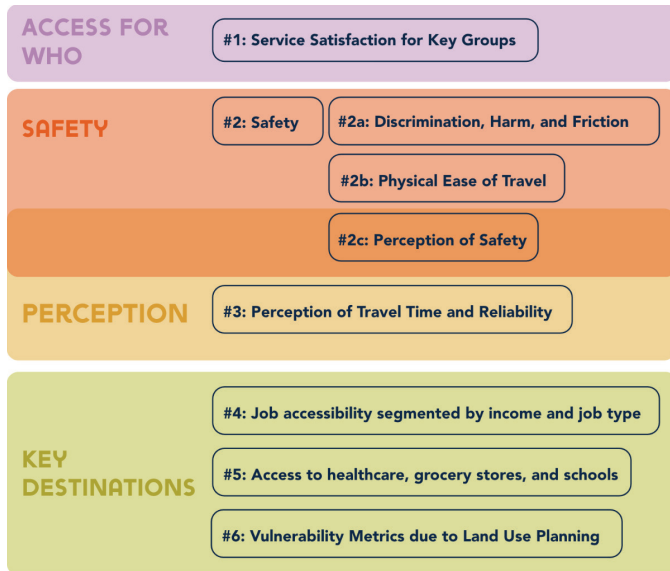


Figure 1. Access to Opportunities Indicators

survey approaches like pop-up survey stations at transit stops and focus groups with vulnerable populations. Creating more opportunities for community members to contribute to the decision-making process can also provide LA Metro with more qualitative data that details the needs of transit users.

In addition to the key opportunities detailed above, five key constraints informed the recommendations: lack of data, community trust and engagement, time and resources, political representation of transit riders, and limitations of LA Metro’s jurisdiction.

Conclusions

Moving forward LA Metro should focus on the four areas outlined in Figure 1: Who has Access, Safety, Perception, and Key Destinations. They can do this by centering the following as metrics of equity and access to opportunity:

- Service Satisfaction: Measure the service satisfaction for key groups, specifically seniors and people with disabilities; youth; caregivers; and transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming individuals.



Jacobo, A., Mora Camacho, A., Parnes, D., Cruz, L. D., Tirado Escareño, P., Lu, R., & Long, Z. (2022). Planning Indicators: Access to Opportunity (Master’s capstone, UCLA). Retrieved from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6vx6g2sb>.

- Safety Experiences for Transit Users: Measure a) Discrimination/Safety/Harm/Friction; b) Physical Ease of Travel; and c) Perception of Safety.
- Perception of Travel Time and Reliability: Use Koopmans’ General Travel Cost indicator to measure changes in and consider travel time and reliability while also incorporating the financial cost of a trip for customers.
- Job Accessibility Segmented by Income and Job Type: Measure a) the number of low-wage jobs within a 30-minute travel time of low-income households; and b) the number of retail, food service, and industrial jobs within a 30-minute travel time of low-income households.
- Access to Health Care, Grocery Stores, and Schools: Measure a) the accessibility of health care facilities within 30 minutes by transit in Equity Focused Communities, as defined by LA Metro; b) the accessibility of grocery stores within 30 minutes by transit in Equity Focused Communities; and c) the accessibility of schools within 30 minutes by transit in Equity Focused Communities.
- Vulnerability Metrics Due to Land Use Planning: Use displacement risk and resiliency to displacement as part of evaluation for Metro’s future construction of new transportation projects and the updates of existing services and routes.