GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES FOR EQUITY CRITERION

As adopted in the 2022 Policy Framework for PSRC's Federal Funds, the project evaluation criteria for PSRC's 2023 project selection processes evaluate how projects may address disparities, gaps, and community engagement, and what policies are in place to minimize displacement.

More specifically, in Section 1, project sponsors are asked to identify the population groups within their project area, provide details on the transportation related disparities or gaps these groups are experiencing, and describe how the project will reduce these disparities or eliminate these gaps. Disparities are considered demographic imbalances related to access to jobs and services, transit safety, exposure to emissions, etc. Gaps are considered missing links in the transportation system.

PSRC has provided an interactive web map to assist sponsors in answering these questions. The web map will allow sponsors to zoom to the geographic area in which their project is located, and choose from a variety of data layers, including the following:

- PSRC's regional demographic profile, with information on the following populations:
  - People of color
  - Households in poverty
  - Older adults (age 65+)
  - People with disabilities
- The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency's Community Air Tool (CAT 2.0) data showing areas disproportionally impacted by poor air quality
- PSRC's Opportunity Index
- Designated T-1 and T-2 freight routes

Each of these layers is further described below, with some additional guidance for how sponsors might utilize the information provided in the web map. The web map also provides information on the location of regionally designated growth and manufacturing/industrial centers and the federally designated rural/urban boundary, as an additional resource.

PSRC has also provided a Transportation System Visualization Tool to assist sponsors in answering these questions. The tool will allow sponsors to zoom to the geographic area in which their project is located, and choose from a variety of data layers, including existing and future conditions for various aspects of the transportation system including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, specialized transportation services, public transportation, etc. These layers can be displayed in context with other regional information such as demographics, which includes people with low incomes, people of color, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, youth (5-17), and people with limited English proficiency. [1]

Please note: This is not a comprehensive inventory of all data that may be available to sponsors regarding various populations within their project area, or data that may assist sponsors in addressing how their project improves health and equity. For example, King County has tools and resources available such as the Equity Impact Review tool and maps featuring key demographic data within the county related to equity. Pierce County also has Health Equity Maps available, related to a variety of measures including income and environmental health. Two additional examples of available tools include the United States Environmental Protection Agency's environmental justice mapping and screening tool called EJSCREEN, and the Washington State Department of Health's Environmental Health Disparities Map. Sponsors are welcome to provide more community-specific data if it is available and are encouraged to contact their county health departments or other local resources for further assistance.

[1] Although highly impacted communities, areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment, immigrants and refugees, and transit dependent populations are noted in Section 1 of the Equity Criterion, these populations are not included in the resources provided by PSRC. Sponsors are encouraged to explore alternative resources to identify these populations.

In Section 3, project sponsors are asked if the project is located in an area of low, medium, or high displacement risk and if the jurisdiction has policies in place to address and reduce the likelihood of displacement.

PSRC's Displacement Risk Map should be used to determine the level of displacement risk for a project area. Displacement risk is a composite of indicators representing five elements of neighborhood displacement risks: socio-demographics, transportation qualities, neighborhood characteristics, housing, and civic engagement. The data from these five displacement indicators were compiled into a comprehensive index of displacement risk, which is mapped for the entire region using the following three categories:

- Higher risk: Census tracts with scores in the top 10% of the score range
- Moderate risk: Census tracts with scores in the next 40% of the score range
- Lower risk: Census tracts with scores in the bottom 50% of the score range

PSRC has also provided examples of policies that can minimize displacement to assist sponsors in answering this question. These examples can be found in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Final SEIS), the Housing Background Paper, and the Housing Innovations Program (HIP). The VISION 2050 FSEIS presents and discusses the potential environmental impacts that may occur upon implementation of a regional growth strategy. It also includes tables that summarize mitigation measures that can reduce the likelihood of displacement (see Tables 4. 1-5 and 4. 3-3). The Housing Background Paper quantifies the experience of residents and housing in the region. It also offers strategies to address a wide array of issues, including displacement (see pgs. 47-50). The Housing Innovations Program (HIP) is an inventory of tools and strategies to promote housing options and affordability in local communities. It includes an interactive search function that allows users to sort through these tools and strategies based on the objectives of the user (e. g. , reduce residential displacement).

PSRC Web Map Data Layers

Regional Equity Analysis

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Regional Equity Analysis includes key demographic data on minority and low-income populations in the region, as well as other populations of interest such as the elderly and disabled. The data is based on the 2019 American Community Survey.

The web map layers indicate percentages of each population within U. S. Census tracts:

- Percentage of people of color within a given Census tract; as a reference point, the regional average threshold of minority populations is 35.9 percent
- Percentage of households within a given Census tract below 200% of the federal poverty level; as a reference point, the region-wide poverty rate is 18.2 percent
- Percentage of people with disabilities within a given Census tract; as a reference point, the regional average threshold is 11 percent
- Percentage of older adults (defined as age 65 and older) within a given Census tract; as a reference point, the regional average threshold is 13.4 percent

Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project impacts areas with any of the populations above, and if so, identify how the project might provide benefits or reduce disparities for these populations. For example, do these populations currently have less access to jobs and services, experience higher rates of pedestrian injuries or fatalities, and have more exposure to air pollutants. If so, is the project improving access to jobs or services, improving safety, reducing exposure to air pollutants, or providing other benefits?

Air Quality Focus Communities

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency has identified focus communities that bear the highest impact of air pollution and also tend to have greater socioeconomic challenges. The agency prioritized their efforts based on the following criteria:

- Diesel pollution
- Household income
- Health sensitivity
- Industrial density
- Race
- Limited English proficiency
- Primary wood burning households

The web map layer identifies the top 10% of Census blocks meeting the highest number of total criteria above. Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project impacts any of these areas, and if so, identify how the project might improve health conditions for these populations. For example, if the project has the potential to reduce air pollutant emissions, particularly from diesel sources. This could be the result of a reduction in freight truck idling, reduction of overall vehicle miles traveled, the introduction of alternative fueled vehicles, etc.

More information on this topic may be found on the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency's website at: https://pscleanair. gov/372/Community-Equity-Access.

PSRC Opportunity Mapping

Originally part of the Growing Transit Communities program, PSRC has conducted a geographic analysis of opportunity in the Puget Sound region, analyzing factors such as housing and neighborhood quality, education, jobs, transportation and health.

The web map provides data on the Comprehensive Opportunity Index, which is the compilation of all five factors. Areas are identified as ranging from very low to very high opportunity. Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project impacts areas of moderate or below opportunity, and if so identify how the project might improve opportunity for these locations. For example, if the project is improving access for these communities to jobs and/or services, improving safety or providing additional modes, reducing emissions of air pollutants, etc.

More information on the Opportunity Mapping may be found here.

Freight Routes

The web map identifies state-designated T-1 freight routes, defined as corridors carrying more than 10 million tons per year, and T-2 freight routes, defined as corridors carrying between 4 to 10 million tons per year. Sponsors may identify if their project is on or affects one of these routes, and if the project will improve the flow of freight traffic.

PSRC Transportation System Visualization Tool

The Transportation System Visualization Tool includes data on various aspects of the transportation system. The tool has been developed to display various transportation datapoints on a map, overlayed with other regional information such as demographics and jurisdiction boundaries. Below please find the full list of data layers:

- ITS signal information
- Public transportation
- Freight assets
- Truck parking
- Congestion roadways
- Bridges
- Fish passage barriers
- Pedestrian facilities on arterials
- Bicycle facilities on arterials
- Bicycle facility types
- Regional shared use paths
- Transit agency service areas
- Transportation demand management
- Roadways
- Jurisdictions / land use
- Demographics / contextual layers

Sponsors should review the data in the visualization tool to determine if their project impacts areas with any of the populations noted in Section 1 of the Equity Criterion, and if so, identify how the project might provide benefits or reduce gaps in the transportation system for these populations. For example, is there currently a gap in bicycle facilities limiting access to jobs and services for one or more of the population groups? If so, the sponsor could note where the gap is on the map and describe how the project would fill this gap and connect the population group(s) to jobs and services.

PSRC Displacement Resources

Increased population, transportation investments, and employment growth can lead to pressure on housing prices and increased instances of displacement. PSRC has developed a displacement risk tool to identify areas at greater risk of displacement based on current neighborhood conditions. These neighborhood conditions are grouped into five key elements to create a composite index:

- Socio-Demographics: Race and ethnicity, linguistic isolation, educational attainment, housing tenure, housing cost burden, and household income
- Transportation Qualities: Access to jobs by car and transit, proximity to existing transit, and proximity to future light rail and streetcar service
- Neighborhood Characteristics: Proximity to services like supermarkets, restaurants, parks, and schools, and proximity to high-income areas
- Housing: Development capacity and median rental prices
- Civic Engagement: Voter turnout

Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project is in an area of low, medium, or high displacement risk. If a project is located in an area of medium or high risk, PSRC has a variety of resources that include examples of policies that can minimize this risk:

- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Final SEIS) (see Tables 4. 1-5 and 4. 3-3)
- Housing Background Paper (see pgs. 47-50)
- Housing Innovations Program (HIP).

Sponsors should review the examples included in these resources, which include strategies such as:

- Implementing mandatory inclusionary zoning
- Creating fee waivers for rehabilitation of affordable housing
- Removing unnecessary large minimum lot size requirements for development
- Encouraging affordable housing near high-capacity transit stations

After reviewing the resources, sponsors should contact their Community Development or Planning Departments to learn more about the local comprehensive plans for the jurisdiction where the project is located to determine if there are any policies in place that align with the examples in these resources.