

PRICING OPTIONS FOR EQUITABLE MOBILITY



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Why consider a new approach to pricing?

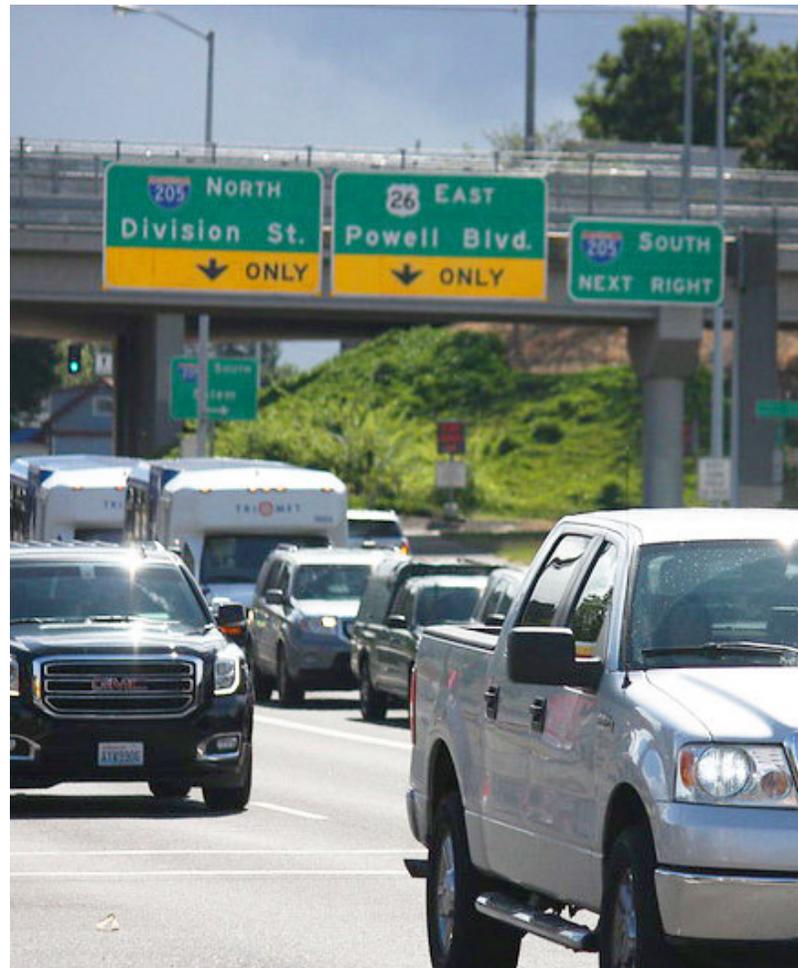
The City of Portland's Pricing Options for Equitable Mobility (POEM) project started with a question:

Should we use pricing strategies more intentionally in Portland to create a more equitable and sustainable transportation system?

Our transportation system today doesn't work for everyone. And with 600,000 new residents expected to live here by 2040, many of the problems we're experiencing now—like worsening traffic, increased risk of crashes and rising carbon emissions—are due to get worse. These challenges disproportionately impact Black, indigenous and communities of color (BIPOC), low-income Portlanders and persons with disabilities.

Regional interest in pricing—sometimes called “congestion pricing,” “value pricing” or “decongestion pricing”—has increased in recent years as we grapple with how to combat these challenges and better manage our roads. Pricing refers to strategies that involve charging people

for driving or using roadway space. These charges can vary based on different factors, for instance how congested the roads are, the time of day, or what type of vehicle is using the road. By applying a charge and sending a signal of “value” for using that road space, pricing can help people consider the impact of their travel choices and encourage certain behaviors (like carpooling, traveling at off-peak hours, or using other, non-driving options when possible).



A COMMITMENT TO TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE

Over the last five years, the City of Portland has strengthened its commitment to transportation equity. This means recognizing the harmful legacy of past decisions and moving decisively now to address these harms. Concretely, this means ensuring that communities of color and people with limited mobility, previously excluded from the decision-making process, have a prominent seat at the table and are centered in policy, investments, services, and programs.

As we strive to achieve transportation justice, in all the work that we do, we will ask ourselves the following questions:



Will it advance equity and address structural racism?



Will it reduce carbon emissions?



Here in Portland, we already put a price on things like parking spaces to help maintain and manage parts of our transportation system. But a lot of our system is unpriced and, to date, we haven't implemented any variable pricing—where charges change based on different factors. Other cities have effectively used pricing to reduce congestion, cut pollution, and manage demand for road space. Pricing can also generate funds to reinvest in a better mobility future.

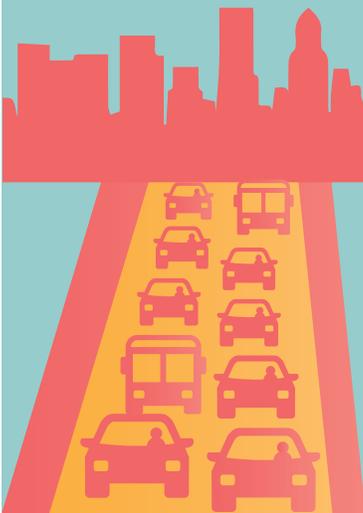
But pricing can also make driving more expensive, which could disproportionately burden some users of our system. At the City of Portland, we are committed to leading with racial equity and pursuing transportation justice. So, before deciding what role pricing might play here in Portland, we have to explore if and how pricing can help reduce disparities and make our system work better for everyone.

In 2019, Portland City Council directed staff from the Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) to do that exploration, kicking off the POEM project. This document provides an overview of the POEM project, the POEM Community Task Force and emerging recommendations from this work.



Why take a closer look at pricing now?

CROWDED ROADS HURT OUR HEALTH, OUR ECONOMY, AND THE CLIMATE



BUILDING MORE ROADS IS NOT AN OPTION



A PROVEN CONGESTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of Portland metro area residents think congestion is a serious problem (Oregon Transportation Survey, 2019). Regional modeling shows that by 2027, almost one third of the region's roads will be congested or severely congested (Metro Regional Transportation Plan, 2018). As people and goods spend more time stuck in traffic, this costs our economy money and worsens our quality of life. The transportation sector also accounts for approximately 42 percent of regional carbon emissions (Portland BPS, 2017), and as fossil fuel-powered vehicle trips increase, so does the climate impact. Portland is already experiencing the impacts of climate change with record-setting heat, flooding, wildfires and other extreme weather events.

We don't all bear these costs equally

BIPOC Portlanders, low-income individuals and people with disabilities are more likely to be impacted by extreme weather events, are more likely to live in areas with less greenspace and are more vulnerable to heat-related and respiratory illnesses. These groups may also be burdened more by traffic congestion because of longer commutes and lower access to privately-owned vehicles.



We have limited space, and building more roads is very costly, both financially and environmentally. Furthermore, evidence shows that expanding road space leads to more driving—a phenomenon called “induced demand.” If we add more lanes as a solution to growing congestion, the problem will only continue to get worse.

Cities around the world have demonstrated that pricing strategies can help reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and support more efficient, sustainable and equitable transportation modes. This is why City Council has directed PBOT and BPS to explore how pricing strategies could be used in Portland to advance our values.

What pricing strategies are we looking at?

Transportation pricing can take many forms: it can be tied to parking, to particular roads or areas, or charged based on the amount of miles driven.

THE POEM PROJECT IS EVALUATING FIVE TYPES OF PRICING STRATEGIES:



Prices on parking



Prices on vehicle commercial services
(e.g., private for-hire trips and urban delivery)



Highway tolling



Cordons or area pricing

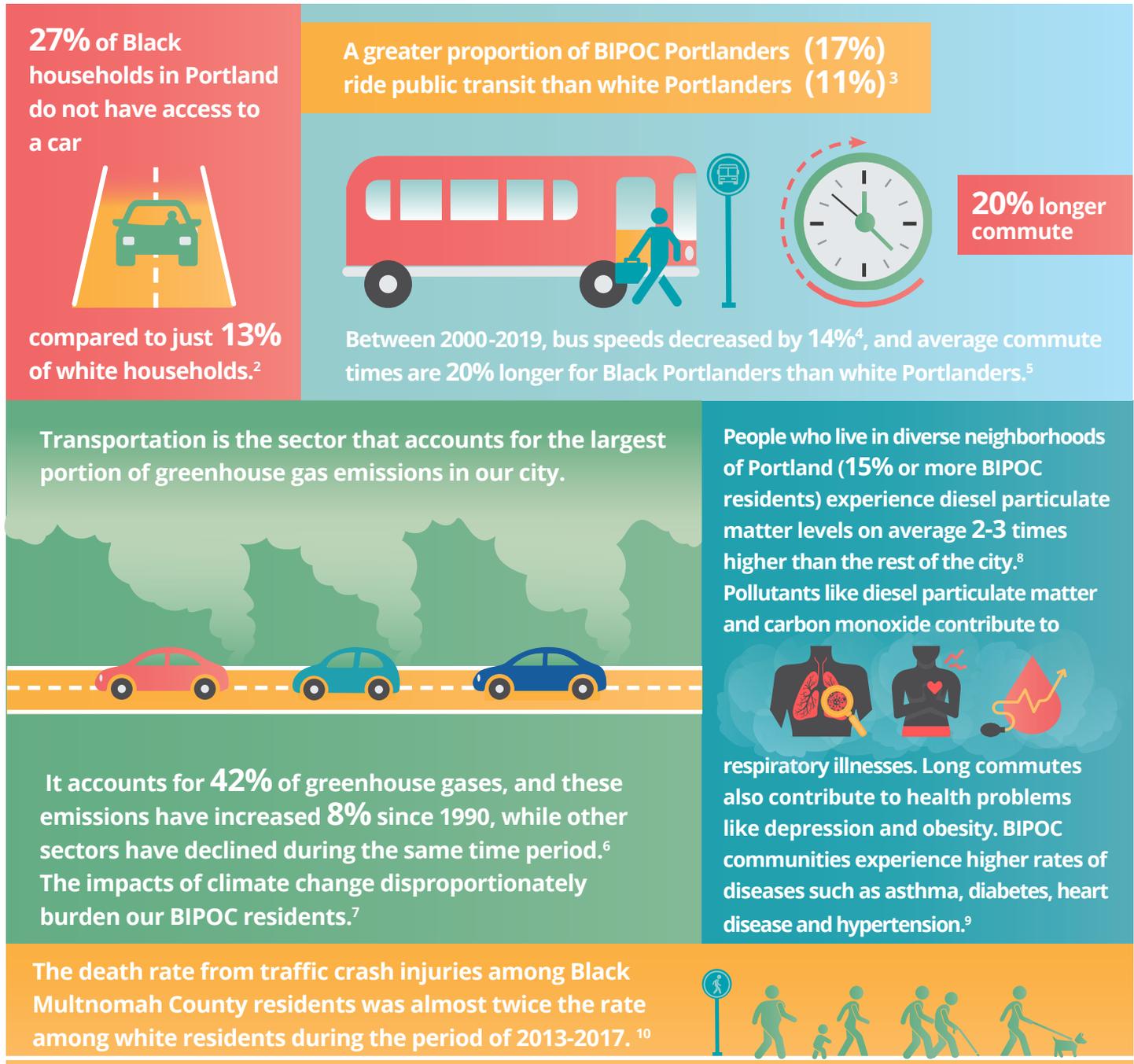


Road usage or vehicle miles traveled
(VMT) charges

While transportation charges are sometimes designed to raise revenue or cover programmatic costs, **the POEM Project is focusing on the role of pricing as a tool to manage travel demand or to better capture the true costs and impacts of a trip.** The project also focuses on exploring new pricing policies and ideas, not reviewing existing prices in place today.

Transportation in Portland today: An unlevel playing field

Past transportation decisions and historic disinvestment have disproportionately harmed BIPOC Portlanders, low-income individuals and persons with disabilities. To ensure a better transportation system for all, we need to take a closer look at what's not working today:



²National Equity Atlas, Year: 2017
https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access/#?breakdown=2

³American Community Survey, Commute by Race data, Year: 2018

⁴TriMet, <https://trimet.org/about/performance.htm#performance>

⁵National Equity Atlas, Year: 2017

https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Commute_time/#?breakdown=2

⁶Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, 2018 emissions summary, <https://www.portland.gov/bps/climate-action/2018-carbon-emissions-and-trends>

⁷Oregon Health Authority, <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/CLIMATECHANGE/Documents/oregon-climate-health-exec-summary.pdf>

⁸Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability analysis, 2020

⁹Multnomah County, 2014 Report Card on Racial and Ethnic Disparities, <https://multco.us/file/37530/download>

¹⁰ Multnomah County REACH Transportation Crash and Safety Report <https://multco.us/file/95327/download>

How did we get here?



Underinvestment in the transportation needs of BIPOC, low-income Portlanders and people with disabilities



Land use policies that prioritize auto-users and white homeowners



A transportation funding source that costs low-income Portlanders the most



A system built around combustion engine cars



BIPOC community members left out of decision-making process

Systemic racism contributing to all the above



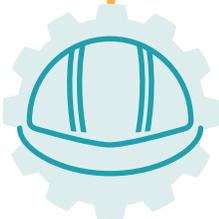
Pricing: one tool in the tool box

In order to combat vehicle congestion and improve mobility for people and goods throughout the city, we will need to use a combination of transportation tools. This includes:



Efficiently allocating road right-of-way:

Giving space and priority on our streets to modes of transportation that move more people equitably and sustainably



Building safe and accessible infrastructure:

Constructing projects and maintaining assets to keep our community moving



Directly providing mobility services and options:

Offering or permitting non-auto travel choices, like transit, bikeshare and micro-mobility services



Offering incentives and programs:

Helping encourage efficient and climate-friendly travel options through financial incentives and educational programming



Equitable pricing and reinvestment:

Applying costs and price signals to capture impacts, encourage certain behaviors, and support mobility investments



These strategies reinforce one another and all play an important part in making our system **work for everyone.**





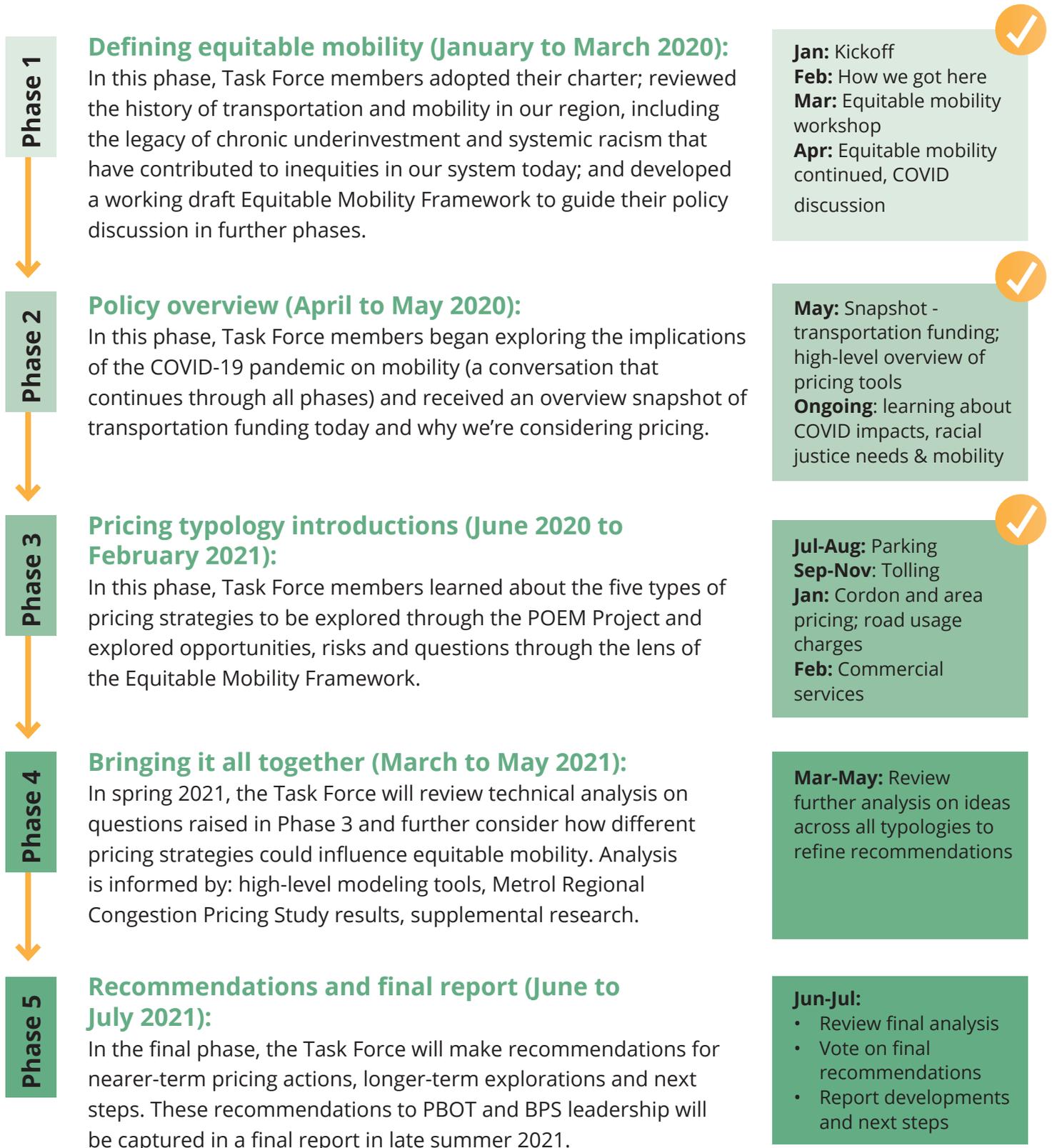
The POEM Community Task Force

The POEM Community Task Force began meeting in January 2020. The City appointed Task Force members following a two-month, open recruitment process in late 2019. Currently, 19 people sit on the Task Force representing diverse perspectives, interests and expertise from across our community. The group meets monthly for two hours and transitioned to virtual convenings in April 2020 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. All meetings are open to the public, and community members are invited to share comments with the Task Force throughout the project.

The Task Force's charge, as defined in its charter, is to inform PBOT and BPS as they consider if and how new pricing strategies could potentially be used more intentionally to improve mobility, address the climate crisis and advance equity for people historically underserved by the transportation system in Portland, including, but not limited to, BIPOC, low-income Portlanders and people with disabilities.



THE TASK FORCE'S WORK IS DIVIDED INTO FIVE KEY PHASES:



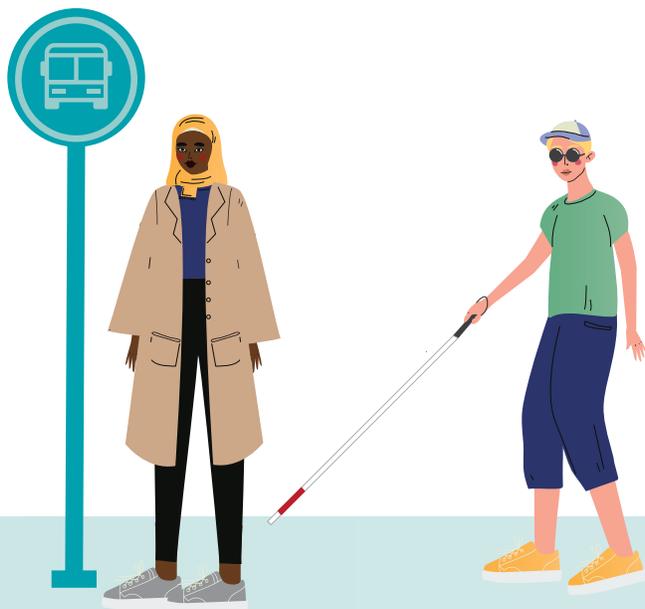
The Task Force is supported by a strategy and planning team comprised of PBOT and BPS staff as well as a community strategic advisor, whose time is supported by the American Cities Climate Challenge.



Defining equitable mobility

As the name suggests, the POEM Project seeks to explore the relationship between pricing policies and equitable mobility. Defining equitable mobility was a key initial step for the POEM Task Force. Over its first few meetings, the group developed a working draft [Equitable Mobility Framework](#). The Task Force is using the framework throughout its process to guide conversation and analysis, explore trade-offs, and inform decision making.

The POEM Equitable Mobility Framework was inspired by and adapted from the [Greenlining Institute's Mobility Equity Framework](#). It is a living document and will continue to be refined throughout the POEM Project process.



Who are we prioritizing?

This framework prioritizes extending benefits, reducing disparities and improving safety for Black people, Indigenous people and People of color (BIPOC communities). Leading with race, the Framework will also be used to consider impacts on people with disabilities, low-income individuals, multi-lingual individuals and displaced communities.

Why center race?

Because the creation and perpetuation of racial inequities has been baked into government, and racial inequities are deep and pervasive. Specifically, racism is a contributing factor to disparities in equitable mobility: unequal access to mobility options, sustainability and health outcomes, experiences of safety in public space and economic opportunity. Addressing racism itself must be part of the work of creating a more equitable transportation system.

WORKING DRAFT EQUITABLE MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

WE CARE ABOUT



Moving People & Goods

EFFICIENCY: Improve time and space-efficient movement of people and goods; non-driving trips should be time competitive with driving trips

TRANSPORTATION AFFORDABILITY: Reduce household expenditure on transportation

CONNECTIVITY: Create ability to get to jobs, services, recreation destinations, and places where you need to go by different modes

AVAILABILITY: Provide an abundance of choice in mobility options, e.g., sidewalks, bus lanes, bike lanes, service frequency

RELIABILITY: Improve predictability of travel time

ACCESSIBILITY: Increase usability of transportation options by people of all abilities

QUALITY: Improve comfort of public transit, bike facilities, and pedestrian facilities, e.g. cleanliness, amenities



Sustainability & Health

CLIMATE IMPACT: Decrease contributions to climate change

AIR QUALITY: Decrease air pollution

HEALTH IMPACT: Improve human health outcomes resulting from transportation



Safety

TRAFFIC SAFETY: Improve safety of the system, e.g., crash risk

PERSONAL SAFETY: Ensure freedom from threat and fear of emotional, psychological, and physical harm when using public space



Economic Opportunity

JOB CREATION: Create new, green, long-term jobs in the transportation sector and support training and transition from other industries

WORKING CONDITIONS: Support workers in the transportation sector to achieve healthy working conditions, fair labor practices and living wages

CONNECTED THRIVING LOCAL ECONOMY: Support economic opportunity across the city; mobility is not a barrier to economic development



Equitable Transportation Planning Process

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH: Collect perspectives from BIPOC communities and ensure they are consulted in decision-making processes

ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION: Ensure transparency of decision making and performance evaluation

POEM's Equitable Mobility Framework is one of many efforts that will inform the development of PBOT's wider transportation justice framework.



The road ahead

The Task Force will continue meeting monthly through July 2021. A final report is anticipated in late summer 2021.

FOR MORE INFORMATION and to sign up for updates about the POEM Project, visit <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/planning/pricing-options-equitable-mobility-poem>.



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