



Equity Working Group Meeting

August 29th, 2024

1:00 – 2:45 p.m.

The meeting was held via Zoom teleconference. A video recording of the meeting is available upon request. The meeting presentations are available [here](#).

ATTENDEE LIST

Presenters:

Eduardo Rivera, City of Long Beach
Itzel Vasquez-Rodriguez, UCLA
Max Podemski, Los Angeles Department of Transportation
Monica Heredia, City of Montclair
Nancy Villaseñor, City of Long Beach
Wendy Macias, City of Pasadena

SCAG Staff:

Anita Au
Annaleigh Ekman
Hina Chanchlani (Presenter)
Jasper Dwyer
Jeannie Ma
Warren Whiteaker

Webinar:

Bernadette Beltran, San Bernardino County, Public Health
Caitlin Brooks, Ventura County Transportation Commission
Candice Vander Hyde, City of Lancaster
Chandra Richards, UC Agriculture and Natural Resources
Claudia Manrique, City of Moreno Valley
Cole Iwamasa, Caltrans
Cristian Cardenas, RAND
Darrin Peschka, Ventura County Transportation Commission
Gail Shiimoto-Lohr, City of Mission Viejo
Ivy Hang, OCTA
Kimberly Cherry, Caltrans
Kevin Nord, Caltrans
Traci Gleason, KOA Consulting
Jessica Nguyen, County of Ventura
Jessica Ramos-Guerra, City of Long Beach
Jesus Barajas, UC Davis
Joseph Cabral, Clean Power Alliance
Krystin Gates, City of Glendora
Lori Huddleston, LA Metro
Mary Kohav, Mott MacDonald

Webinar Cont'd:

Norman Emerson, Emerson & Associates
Ryan Snyder, Caltrans
Steven Jones, City of Bell Gardens



MEETING SUMMARY

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Jeannie Ma, Assistant Regional Planner, SCAG | ma@scag.ca.gov

Jeannie welcomed all participants and reminded the meeting participants that the EWG History document is regularly updated: <https://scag.ca.gov/post/equity-working-group-ewg>.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEWS FROM UCLA STUDENT CAPSTONE, RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT GRANT AWARDEES, AND LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

UCLA Graduate Research “Addressing the Discriminatory Impacts of Redlining and Highway Development in California”

Itzel Vasquez-Rodriguez, Graduate Student Researcher, UCLA | itzelvr@g.ucla.edu

Itzel presented on their UCLA capstone project, “[Addressing the Discriminatory Impacts of Redlining and Highway Development in California](#).” The study examined how redlining in California influenced regional highway development, leading to higher PM 2.5 concentrations, displacement, property devaluation, and segregation in communities of color. It also explored policies California agencies can advocate for to promote environmental justice and equity. The methodology included literature review, geospatial and statistical analysis, criteria alternatives matrix (CAM) analysis, and a historical overview of redlining in Southern California. Recommendations included empowering communities, focusing on race and ethnicity, revising zoning and planning goals, and improving data accessibility. Key takeaways were that highway development targeted historically redlined communities of color, the impacts persist today, and harmful legacies must be addressed through policy changes.

Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** What specific examples from Southern California illustrate the long-term impacts of highway development on marginalized communities?
 - **Answer:** We examined 250 documents on redlining and highway development but focused on Los Angeles and Stockton. The Century Freeway 105, constructed in 1968, displaced 3,000 families, 117 businesses, and numerous churches, and parks in the predominantly Black communities of Watson and Willowbrook. Lower construction costs were cited, but the area was labeled hazardous and undervalued, incentivizing environmentally harmful projects. The 10 freeway in Los Angeles was built through the affluent Black community of Sugar Hill (present day West Adams) displacing residents. We additionally researched the resistance to the creation of freeways and destruction of neighborhoods. The community of Beverly Hills successfully resisted freeway construction, but other efforts to prevent freeway construction in Boyle Heights and similar communities of color were unsuccessful. This example shows how communities of color could not prevent freeway construction, but it was possible for white communities to prevent it. 74% of redlined areas have higher segregation levels of communities of color and the opposite of that 90% of census tracts A-rated were white. Regarding the environmental impact, freeway construction led to higher PM2.5 levels in redlined areas. Redlining facilitated freeway development, resulting in redlined areas having significantly higher PM2.5 levels and more emergency room visits compared to areas previously rated green or A-rated.
- **Question:** What measures can be taken to ensure that future infrastructure development promotes equity rather than perpetuates existing disparities?
 - **Answer:** We have developed four policy approaches in our report. The first approach is that there needs to



be an explicit focus on race and ethnicity to address the impacts of redlining by explicitly incorporating race and ethnicity into policy decisions. The second approach is that there needs to be enhanced community empowerment to strengthen community decision-making authority and ensure engagement is not undermined by outdated or ignored principles. The third approach is to align land use and zoning with planning goals to address segregation and its impacts. The fourth approach is to make data more accessible and understandable to ensure it serves as a useful resource for communities.

City of Pasadena Historic Project of the Reconnecting Pasadena 710 Master Plan Process

Wendy Macias, Senior Projects Manager, City of Pasadena | wmacias@cityofpasadena.net

Wendy presented on the [Historic Project of the Reconnecting Pasadena 710 Master Plan](#). The 710 freeway, constructed in 1975, displaced low-income populations and communities of color in an area known as the "Stub." The now relinquished freeway had no land use or zoning designations, prompting the master plan to align with city council and general plan goals. The plan acknowledges the history of displacement, aims to equitably distribute benefits, mitigate impacts on vulnerable populations, and identify future land uses. In 2023, the Pasadena City Council established the [Reconnecting Communities 710 Advisory Group](#) to collaborate with city staff, consultants, and community members to develop a vision and plan. A historic report on the 710 displacement was integrated into the master plan, compiling comprehensive data and oral histories of affected communities. Moving forward, the historic project consultants are working with the restorative justice team to develop a framework that integrates social equity principles throughout the master plan.

Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** How important was the inclusion of the historical review in shaping master plan and guiding community engagement?
 - **Answer:** Incorporating a historical review was crucial for reintegrating this land into the city and the relinquishment of the freeway that included discussions with Caltrans. Acknowledging and memorializing the history of the communities displaced is important to inform the master plan process. When the city council appointed members to the Reconnecting Communities 710 Advisory Group, it was a representation of the many communities that make up the city, they also showed support in the historic review. We want to educate the public about Pasadena's history use the historic review to guide the master plan, making sure it aligns and complements the land development and community engagement. Input from community engagement included a want for an acknowledgement of the impact of the highway. It is important to recognize the loss of generational wealth and the impact of artificially depressed property values and racial covenants on displaced communities.
- **Question:** How has the community responded to the Historical Review efforts?
 - **Answer:** The response is great. The oral history process is intentional and grassroots, with consultants reaching out to those affected by displacement. We asked participants to share their stories while recognizing that they must relive their trauma. These stories are important for informing the community, though we encountered some skepticism about how they could be helpful. The master plan process is establishing a restorative justice framework and providing factual information. A restorative justice approach does not have a set template; it is the city's responsibility to develop its own framework, and with community feedback, we are being led in the right direction.
- **Question:** Has the City of Pasadena considered adding a museum exhibit focused on the oral history of those who were displaced by the 710 freeway? So that the community at large can hear some of these oral histories and understand what happened and learn from this.



- **Answer:** Yes, it is a conversation that we are having as we develop parts of the master plan. There are also conversations of history being incorporated into public art. Should it go into the city's library, or somewhere online repository? Community members have also expressed similar views. We want to showcase its history somewhere accessible and in the form of acknowledgement and recognition of all the impacted communities of the freeway and hopefully it will be impacted by the master plan.
- **Question:** Are community meetings accessible online?
 - **Answer:** Reconnecting communities advisory meetings are accessible by website where you can access those live on the third Wednesday of each month.

City of Long Beach Shoreline Drive Gateway and Reconnecting North Long Beach-Hamilton Loop

Nancy Villaseñor, Capital Projects Coordinator, City of Long Beach | nancy.villasenor@longbeach.gov

Eduardo Rivera, Administrative Analyst City of Long Beach | eduardo.rivera@longbeach.gov

Eduardo presented on the Shoreline Drive Realignment, a project focused on replacing the Shoemaker Bridge at Shoreline Drive along the Interstate-710 corridor. Originally built in 1954, the bridge had restricted community access to open spaces and negatively impacted nearby neighborhoods. The realignment includes structural updates to improve safe and accessible connectivity throughout downtown Long Beach and surrounding transportation facilities. In addition to replacing the bridge, the project converts acres of existing roadways into parkland, adds bike and pedestrian paths, implements two-way complete streets, installs roadway lighting, and restores access to open spaces. These improvements align with the goals of the Drake-Chavez Park Master Plan.

Nancy presented on the Reconnecting North Long Beach-Hamilton Loop, which will reconnect communities divided by the emergence of State Route (SR) 91, from Atlantic to Cherry Avenues in North Long Beach. This community-driven project will transform the SR-91 embankment underpass into park space and a two-mile loop, connecting both sides of the freeway as a greenbelt. The greenbelt will include pedestrian paths, protected bike lanes, community gardens, and recreational facilities. Extensive community engagement for the project included charrettes, public workshops, community block parties, and focused outreach to historically excluded groups, such as communities of color and individuals with limited English proficiency. Next steps include conducting traffic and environmental studies, traffic engineering, landscape architecture, additional community engagement.

Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** The graphics for both projects, and particularly the Hamilton Loop Project, are beautifully designed; did you notice if this focus on well-designed content had any impact on communicating ideas to the public or did it have any other benefits or drawbacks? Do you have any other advice for effective communication?
 - **Answer:** The visualizations were very helpful to show the community what would be built there, and we received a lot of community feedback based on those images. It would be harder to talk about the project without visualizing it. We learned from a separate project with no visualizations that it was difficult for community members, project managers, and engineers to discuss it without having an idea of what it may look like. Cesar Chavez Park is a future separate project that would aligns with the Shoreline project. Those images are helpful having those conversations for the community to ask questions.

City of Montclair San Antonio Creek Trail

Monica Heredia, Public Works Director, City of Montclair | mheredia@cityofmontclair.org

Monica presented on the San Antonio Creek Trail Project, which aims to restore and expand community access to open spaces by connecting the 20-mile Pacific Electric Trail with the Montclair TransCenter. The project has involved extensive community



engagement, including pop-up events, virtual surveys, workshops, and meetings with multiple agencies. In-person events attracted up to 300 participants, whose feedback shaped the trail's design. The design features a multi-use path for walking and biking on one side and percolation basins with a walking path on the other. Key challenges include the Metrolink rail line, the Interstate-10, the channel owned by the Army Corps, and coordinating with 43 private property owners. Proposed solutions include an overcrossing and undercrossing to improve pedestrian access near the rail and freeway and working with easement consultants to gain access to the channel and coordinating with private property owners.

Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** How have local stakeholders, including community groups and environmental organizations, been engaged in the planning process for these projects?
 - **Answer:** We had individual meetings with Caltrans discussing barriers to the project, which included the Chino Water Basin District regarding the pipe that goes into the basin. We are incorporating community feedback from the online survey and public workshop events. For example, most of the respondents wanted trees, landscape, shade, lighting, and safety measures along the trail. As a response, we made sure to include that input by planting 200 trees, providing more lights along the walkways, installing cameras, and workstations along the walking path. We also wanted to incorporate public art of the history of Montclair & the native tribes that lived there before. One of the restrooms (near the park and on the trail) will be wrapped with an art piece depicting the Gabrieleño tribe.

LADOT Hollywood Safety and Mobility Project

Max Podemski, Transportation Planning Associate, Los Angeles Department of Transportation | max.podemski@lacity.org

Max presented on the [Hollywood Safety and Mobility Project](#), a priority corridor designated in 2019 that covers Hollywood Boulevard between Gower and Fountain Avenues. The project, launched in 2023, aims to improve traffic safety, reduce fatalities, enhance connectivity, support sustainable transportation, and complement future redesigns of the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Planned improvements include left turn calming, pedestrian refuge islands, rapid flashing beacons, and yellow signal light. Extensive community engagement took place within the project area, such as in Thai Town and Little Armenia, with stakeholder briefings, multilingual charrettes, surveys, and bike and walk audits. Feedback focused on reducing speeds, creating safer spaces for pedestrians, and removing parking spaces for bike lanes, particularly around Gower Avenue. Next steps include collecting feedback on conceptual designs to inform the final design and working with StreetsLA to resurface streets in preparation for bike lanes.

Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** Was there any input from community members that wasn't initially part of the project design but is now being integrated as a result of their feedback?
 - **Answer:** The feedback we got from the Salvation Army and a food service kitchen was that removing parking for a protected bike lane near the 110 Freeway presented an issue for volunteers to access the social services areas. We worked with engineers to incorporate parking back into the plan to be able to serve these social services while maintaining the protected bike lane for drivers heading westbound to the freeway and keeping one parking space in the eastbound lane.
- **Question:** Given the diverse demographics of Hollywood Blvd (race/ethnicity, people experiencing homelessness, language barriers, etc.), how did you ensure their voices were heard in the planning process?
 - **Answer:** This area is diverse with Little Armenia and Thai Town so we tried to translate all materials into the dominant languages of the area, even if there were monolingual speakers we were trying to target our outreach to those communities as a sign of respect. We coordinated a multi-pronged approach using social



media and on the ground signage. One of our most powerful tools was working with community ambassadors who knew the area, had existing relationships with the people, were familiar with community events, and helped us get into those spaces and gather input.

3. HIGHWAYS TO BOULEVARDS REGIONAL STUDY UPDATE

Hina Chanchlani, Associate Regional Planner, SCAG | chanchlani@scag.ca.gov

Hina provided an overview of the [Highways to Boulevards Regional Study](#), which aims to remove, retrofit, or mitigate negative impacts of highways and transportation facilities. The study assesses current conditions, establishes a framework and metrics, identifies and evaluates potential projects, and provides a guide to support local efforts and stakeholder engagement. Potential projects include complete streets, bus rapid transit, pedestrian overpasses, highway caps, and rails-to-trails, alongside planning and construction. The initiative emphasizes best practices from inclusion to affordability across planning stages. A project advisory council met bi-monthly that offered feedback and community-based organizations from each of the SCAG region provided input and participated in the online surveys. The study also identifies, and screens projects based on prioritization criteria, using data on existing conditions and community engagement activities across the SCAG region.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS & OFFERS, REQUESTS, AND CONNECTIONS

Jeannie Ma, Assistant Regional Planner, SCAG | ma@scag.ca.gov

- The [Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program](#) includes \$607 million in funding for capital construction and community planning projects that improve access to daily needs such as jobs, education, healthcare, food, nature, and recreation and foster equitable development and restoration. The program covers up to 80% of planning costs and 50% of construction costs, with a 20% minimum non-federal match required. If you plan on applying and would like a letter of support, please contact Hina Chanchlani at chanchlani@scag.ca.gov
- USDOT's [Environmental Justice Stories Page](#), which offers a collection of stories that provides valuable insights into navigating federal programs, conducting meaningful community engagement, empowering communities, and advancing EJ in neighborhoods, now features a story on Reconnecting Communities.
- SCAG is hosting the [Southern California Demographic Workshop](#) with the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy on September 24, 2024 at [SCAG's main office in Downtown Los Angeles](#), with an online attendance option. The workshop will bring together local leaders, officials, and experts to discuss the implications of changing population growth in regional planning. Please [register](#) for the SCAG Southern California Demographic Workshop in advance.
- Ventura County is hosting the first [Government and Disability Summit](#) in the City of Ventura from September 24th to 27th. This summit will provide unique opportunities for local agencies and community organizations to explore solutions for disability inclusion, collaborations towards accessible communities, empowering individuals with disabilities to share their experiences, and implementing accessibility initiatives at the government level. Register for the Government and Disability Summit by September 10th.
- The [USDOT Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program](#) <https://www.planning.dot.gov/resource-search.aspx?p=1https://www.planning.dot.gov/> helps transportation officials and decision-makers address transportation needs in their communities. This program offers a resource hub, peer programs, training, video learning, planning essentials, technical assistance, and support for transit operators, community leaders, and state, local, regional, and Tribal governments.

If you have questions about this meeting, please feel free to reach out to Anita Au (au@scag.ca.gov) or Annaleigh Ekman (ekman@scag.ca.gov). SCAG also encourages participants to reach out if you have a topic, project, program, tool, or resource that you think should be highlighted in a future meeting.