

Social Equity & Environmental Justice: A Draft Definition

Social Equity and Environmental Justice means prioritization of transit service to address gaps in mobility and avoid or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse social, economic, or human health impacts for historically disadvantaged populations, including youth, elderly, disabled, minority, and economically disadvantaged communities. In addition to considering origins, priority should be given to destinations for employment, education, healthcare, social services, and civic engagement.

Origins of the draft definition . . .

Social Equity

A transit system that meets the objective of social equity asks the question “Do all populations enjoy a level of personal mobility (via any transportation mode that is realistically and consistently available to that population) that provides access to employment, education, healthcare, social services, and civic engagement?” and then prioritizes transit investments, via both service allocation and fare structure, to address gaps in mobility. At its best, a transit system would be a net contributor to social equity by creating superior mobility for historically disadvantaged populations and providing access to opportunity and overcome disadvantages experienced in areas other than personal mobility.

Historically disadvantaged communities that should be considered in a set of indicators for social equity include:

- Youth and the elderly
- Disabled persons
- Ethnic minorities, including individuals for whom English is not a primary language
- Students, including nontraditional student populations
- Economically disadvantaged persons, including shiftworkers and the working poor

Environmental Justice

The US Department of Transportation identifies three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2000.htm>