

Equity Advisory Committee

Wednesday, March 27th, 2024

5:00-6:30 PM | ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85454228472?pwd=d2JHN0dab0NQZmpFYkhSYVVMR3A5QT09>

Participants: Anne Nelson Stoner, Sarah Muskin, Jason Charest, Eleni Churchill, Charlie Baker (EAC Staff); Lydia Diamond, Madafar Jassim, Melissa Heitkamp, Kashka Orlow, Ragab Mohamed, Omar Derzi, Clayton Clark, Jules Wetechi, Corali Cotrina (EAC Members); Mona Tolba (Interpreter)

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

The EAC discussed rescheduling the Just Action book club. There is interest in making sure this meeting happens! Anne Nelson will share her notes in the follow up email.

2. **News & Updates**

Kashka invited EAC members to speak to the Climate Council about their lived experience with climate change and its disparate impacts.

3. **Transportation Planning at CCRPC: How does it work?**

Eleni provided an overview of what a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is; key MPO responsibilities; what transportation planning is; the transportation planning process; levels of transportation planning; and what happens after the planning phase. She shared key examples throughout Chittenden County of transportation projects CCRPC has been involved in.

Mona asked how, as a community member, can someone raise an issue, for example: potholes, a dangerous intersection, or the need for a bike lane. Eleni shared that community members need to work through their municipal representatives. CCRPC Staff are also happy to help connect community members to municipal staff to voice concerns.

Melissa asked whether pedestrian pathways fall under transportation planning. Eleni responded yes, it falls under “active transportation,” which can fall under all three levels of planning: regional, corridor, and scoping.

Jassim asked whether corridor studies look to increase lanes for buses because they are causing congestion. Eleni shared that yes, this is considered in transportation planning and that there are sometimes pull-offs, but there are sometimes space limitations. Jassim responded space is not always the limited factor since there is parking on both sides.

Kashka shared that as a parent, and someone who has lived in the community for over a decade, having bike lanes in the same space as vehicle lanes is not safe and she would not allow her daughters to bike, which is unfortunate because they love to bike. When redesigning, please separate the bike lanes. They know someone recently killed in a hit and run accident.

Melissa asked how we can approach planning for bike paths from a regional and long-term perspective so that it is not happening in ad hoc ways throughout the community. We need to be coordinating regionally. Eleni referred to the Active Transportation Plan, which sets out to do just that.

Coralie asked why some municipalities have more active transportation infrastructure than others, and how to navigate local politics when the municipality is not responsive to community needs. Can CCRPC help? One of the biggest high schools in the county is right next to a road without sidewalks. Eleni responded that community members must work through their local government to raise these concerns, and there are conflicting needs, so the municipalities must prioritize. What can community members do if their municipality is not listening? If it is a local road, you cannot bypass your municipality. But if there's an issue with a state road, CCRPC and VTrans can intervene.

What do we do about the fact that municipalities are so under-resourced? Why are we not investing in a statewide public transportation system? We need to be looking at the whole system together, not in a patchwork manner, so that kids can bike from the Old North End to Essex Junction if they want. Eleni shared that CCRPC agrees we need a robust and sustainable public transportation system. But, for now, the best we can do with the resources we are given is connect communities through segments at a time.

Coralie asked whether these EAC meetings will be accessible to other non-English speaking community members. Anne Nelson shared CCRPC is thinking about this and a longer-term language access plan for the EAC.

4. **Battery Street Corridor Study: Overview & Engagement** – Jason Charest

Jason took the last five minutes to provide a brief overview of the Battery Street Corridor Study and the two options the project team is wrestling with. Most EAC members prefer the option with the bike lanes removed from the traffic lanes.

5. **Looking Ahead & Next Steps:** April in person meeting to discuss housing!